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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

April 29, 2002

Left Behind



Little has changed for Afghan women.
But RAWA is fighting back.

PLUS:
J. Eric Duskin
reports from Kyrgyzstan

By Kristie Reilly

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Editorial

Stand Up for Peace

In March, the Israeli Defense Forces, on the instructions of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, entered cities and refugee camps in the Occupied Territories and rounded up a couple thousand Palestinian men and boys, ages 16 to 24. In a few of these operations, before being interrogated, prisoners were stripped to the waist, bound, blindfolded and marked with numbers on their arms and foreheads. The televised images of this human cataloging outraged some Israelis, particularly those who remember when they too, confined to ghettos, were corralled and marked with identifying numbers.

Responding to protests, Chief of Staff General Shaul Mofaz eventually halted the practice. "It was badly received in the media," explained a Sharon spokesman. An editorial in *Ha'aretz*, noting that Mofaz's action was "very tardy," put it this way: "The IDF caused deliberate suffering and humiliation to the broader Palestinian population. ... Actions that harm the population and involve humiliations of civilians sabotage the chances—in any case minimal—of reaching a cease-fire and eventually an agreement and reconciliation. ... Instead of fanning the flames and sowing hatred, [the government] must increase its efforts to achieve calm and return to the political track."

The numerical marking of civilians in mass roundups received little attention in the United States. The *Washington Post* made a passing reference to the practice. The *New York Times* presented it as an allegation based on "reports." After quoting Arafat—"Is that not what they say the Nazis did to the Jews?"—the *Times* let an Israeli army spokeswoman have the last word: "This is an obscene and absurd statement which hardly warrants further response." End of story.

This eerie silence extends to the halls of Congress and the White House, where Sharon's escalation of the war has evoked barely a murmur of protest. That is especially disturbing because Americans share complicity with the actions of Sharon and the Israeli military, which the United States funds to the tune of \$1.3 billion a year.

Public opinion polls repeatedly show that a sizable majority of American Jews supports

the peace process. A survey last October by *Jewish Week* found that 73 percent of those polled said it was in Israel's interest for the United States to serve as a "credible and effective facilitator" of the peace process, even if that meant disagreements between the two countries.

Yet the powerful pro-Israel lobby brooks no criticism of either Israel or U.S. military aid. The key members of that lobby are the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. As Michael Massing pointed out recently in *The American Prospect*, these two organizations, which have "the most influence on foreign policy, have had leaders who are far more conservative and hard-line than are most American Jews."

It is time for American Jews to repudiate groups like AIPAC and speak out against Sharon's vision of greater Israel, the garrison state. And it is time for all Americans to ask that the United States leverage its very significant influence for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

The Bush administration has made tentative steps in that direction, supporting a

Some Israelis remember when they too were corralled and marked with identifying numbers.

U.N. resolution that called for creation of a Palestinian state and criticizing the Israeli incursions into the Occupied Territories as "unhelpful." More is needed. One way to go would be to link progress toward peace negotiations with continued military support. Such linkage could pressure Sharon to accept Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah's proposal to trade land for peace.

An argument can be made that U.S. military aid to Israel violates the Arms Export Control Act, which holds that the U.S. government shall only sell or provide arms to countries if such military aid "will strengthen the security of the United States and promote world peace."

As it stands, continuing to support Sharon's escalation of the conflict with the Palestinians does neither.

—Joel Bleifuss

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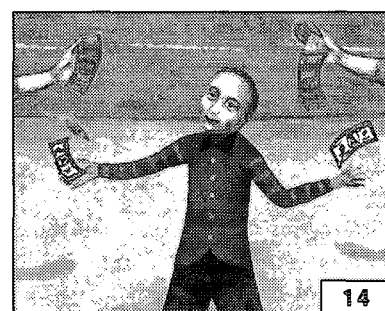
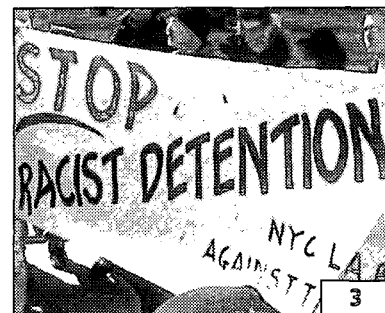
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By Chiori Santiago

The living legacy of the radical past.

Cover photo: RAWA/World Picture News



You Turned Too Soon

I think Doug Ireland may be a tad premature in suggesting a resurgence of the right as a result of the elections in Europe this year ("Europe's Right Turn," March 18). Take Germany for example. I was surprised he did not mention the scandal involving Leo Kirch, the media mogul whose empire is on the skids, and, in a replay of Enron, has implicated government figures in Bavaria (the Texas of Germany) and is expected to harm the electoral chances of the right-winger, Edmund Stoiber.

Even in France, the challenge of Jean-Pierre Chevènement will probably prove more harmful to the incumbent, Jacques Chirac, than to his Socialist opponent, Lionel Jospin. Since Paris and Berlin are the locomotive of the European Union, it is too early to speak—as your headline does—of "Europe's Right Turn."

Gerald Horne
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Doug Ireland replies: The collapse of Leo Kirch's pyramidal media conglomerate presents German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder with a lose-lose situation. The only potential buyer for the bankrupt empire is conservative Rupert Murdoch, but allowing him to take over such a major part of the German media would alienate part of Schröder's electorate. But if Schröder rejects Murdoch, and Kirch goes belly-up, this will increase unemployment at a time when that is a key electoral issue.

As I wrote, Chevènement will be taking more votes from Chirac than from Jospin in the first round of voting; but in the runoff, absent Chevènement, the right-wing, nationalist, "protest" part of Chevènement's vote will go to Chirac, not Jospin.

Finally, the Paris-Berlin axis dominating the European Union has been over for some months. Schröder instead has cast his lot with Tony Blair, who in turn has a newfound entente with Spain's arch-conservative Jose Maria Aznar to dismantle or abolish many E.U. protections of workers rights. At the moment, it is a Berlin-London-Madrid axis, with strong support from Rome's Silvio Berlusconi, that is bent on shredding the E.U. "social contract." Turn to the right, wouldn't you say?

Prison Dues

Erica Barnett writes as if it is a bad thing for prisoners to be doing work ("Prison Blues," March 4). I am not a big fan of why

Third Party Web Debate

In *These Times'* Web site, inthesetimes.com, features "Egalitarian America" by G. William Domhoff. This commentary on the Nader campaign and third parties is part of Domhoff's current book project, tentatively titled *Toward an Egalitarian America: Practical Pathways to a Better Future*. Readers are invited to respond to Domhoff's arguments by e-mail, addressing all comments to itt@inthesetimes.com. Responses may be posted on the Web.

most people are in prison (the drug war), but I see nothing wrong with a prisoner doing corporate or factory work.

This is not the same as Kathie Lee Gifford sweatshops. First, this work is done by people who have broken the law and are in prison. They are not forced to work in some sweatshop to make a living. Second, the pay is really a non-issue. Tax money supports prisoners. They have no food to pay for and no housing to pay for, so there is no need for them to make more than \$1.50 an hour.

Yes, prisons should be places of reform, education, etc. But let's face it, they aren't. And yes, corporations are making money off of the sweat of the little people, but that is the nature of corporate America.

John P. Miller
Hudson, Wisconsin

Angry Third Parties

Neither your reviewer Doug Ireland, author Micah Sifry, nor Green Party zealots noticed the one thing third parties have in common ("Party Animals," March 18). Yes, they get some fuel from anger at the system. But they are fuel-injected by hatred of the party and the personality in the White House.

Teddy Roosevelt ran as a Bull Moose because he hated President Taft. George Wallace ran in 1968 to oppose the reigning Democrats on civil rights. Ross Perot had a vendetta against the elder George Bush. And Nader garnered his support from people disappointed in Clinton's drift to the center.

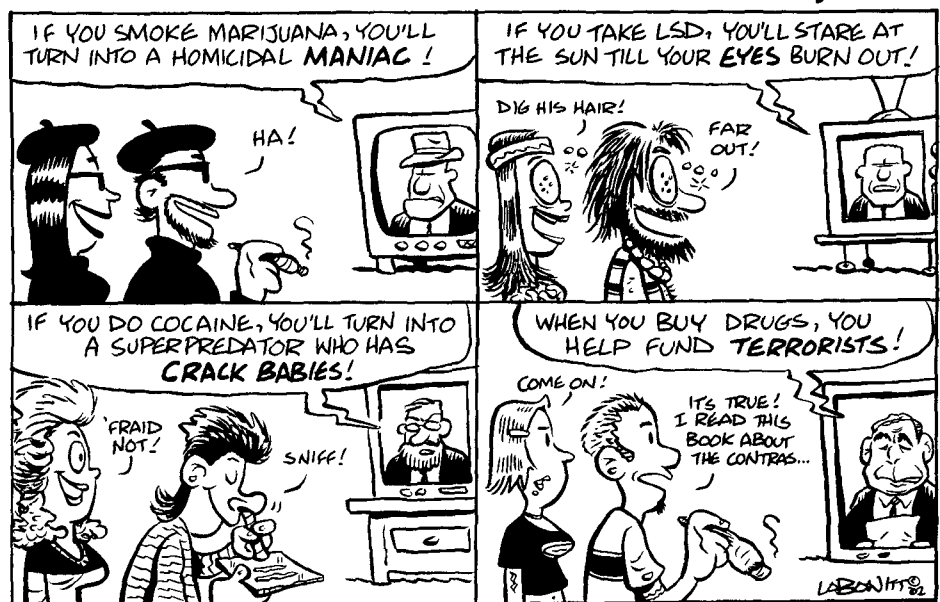
So if Nader really wanted to energize the Green Party, he should have let Gore win. Another four years of Democratic centrism would have made the left stronger than ever. Instead, the left is off the political map, Bush is on a roll, and any third party challenge to him in 2004 will have come from the right. Thanks again, Ralph.

Bruce Watson
Leverett, Massachusetts

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Please keep your letter short and include your address and daytime phone number.

Terry LaBan



Lockdown

Amnesty International targets INS for treatment of 9/11 detainees

By Abby Scher

NEW YORK—The Immigration and Naturalization Service is detaining people on routine visa violations and holding them for weeks or months until the Federal Bureau of Investigation “clears” them, an unusual process “shrouded in secrecy,” according to Amnesty International.

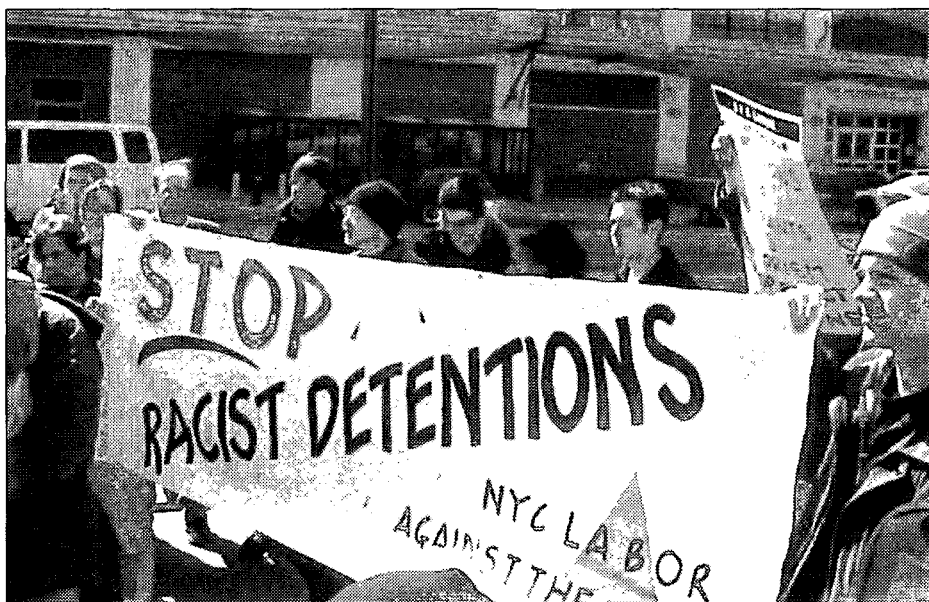
In November, the INS admitted to detaining 1,200 people. The exact number now in custody is not known, however, because many additional immigrants have been rounded up and released since then.

On March 23, members from at least 30 unions rallied in front of a federal detention center where an estimated 40 Pakistani and other Muslim immigrants swept up after September 11 are being held. They joined the 150 or so regulars who’ve been protesting the secrecy, unlimited detentions and violation of the due process rights of foreign detainees every Saturday since January 26.

Michael Letwin, president of the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys, led the labor contingent. He told the crowd of several hundred: “Today there is literally a wave of terror against Middle Easterners and South Asians. There are at least 300 who remain in custody. These kinds of acts that so clearly violate the Constitution are anathema to us.”

The demonstration was held one week after an Amnesty International report singled out the federal Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn for violating basic rights under international law in its treatment of September 11 detainees.

Amnesty documented “a disturbing level of secrecy” by the federal agencies detaining people at the MDC and other centers nationwide. Nonetheless, by interviewing 30 lawyers, groups working with the detainees and those released, and detainees’ relatives, Amnesty was able to piece together evidence the U.S. government is ignoring constitutionally protected rights to due process, access to lawyers and prompt filing of charges.



Protesters at a federal detention center in New York in March.

Amnesty also expressed grave concern at the flouting of the rule of law. “Scores of people were held for more than 48 hours,” the report says, “and several for more than 50 days, before being charged with a violation.” One Saudi Arabian man was held for 119 days before being charged.

The Amnesty report points out that rule changes by the INS—and not last November’s USA Patriot Act—are responsible for the treatment of some detainees. The Justice Department told immigration judges in September to restrict information and close hearings in “special cases,” including “confirming or denying whether such a case is on the docket.”

A new INS regulation also allows the service to override immigration judges’ decision to grant bail, a practice that “undermines the principle of the separation of powers between the executive and the judiciary,” according to Amnesty.

Amnesty found troubling cases of detainment in 26 states, though most detainees are in New York and New Jersey. Among its findings: MDC staff told the wife of a detainee her husband was not there, even though she had received letters from him postmarked from the facility; staff illegally barred her from visiting him; more than 40 detainees may be confined to cells for 23 hours a day; and 19 MDC detainees did not have lawyers as of late 2001, leading one man to go on a hunger strike.

The Amnesty report also found numerous instances since September in

which the government has not informed families and lawyers of where detainees are imprisoned or when they are moved. Detainees have been prevented from posting bail, held even after bail is posted, and denied the right to counsel. Others were “obstructed in their ability to make phone calls.” As it is, MDC detainees are allowed only one phone call per week: If there is no answer at the law office, they must wait another week to try again.

Most of the detainees the government has admitted to rounding up are Pakistani (207), followed by Egyptians (74), Turks (46) and Yemenis (38). However, the INS has created a category of “inactive” detainees about which it refuses to release information. While Amnesty gained limited access to the New Jersey county jails, the MDC in Brooklyn refused to allow investigators entry.

Racial profiling of the sort seen since September violates international law, the report charges. “There is also concern that statements made by the government purporting to link routine immigration cases with potential terrorism may fuel anti-immigrant sentiments and contribute to a wider backlash,” it says.

Imtiaz Rahi has been coming to the demonstrations every week with a small contingent from the Pakistani American Society of Long Island. He was happy to see the number of allies growing because, in his community, “People are scared. They want to come out, but they’re scared.” ■

Half Measures

NGOs reject U.N. Monterrey Consensus

By Laurence Pantin

MONTERREY, MEXICO—Representatives of civil society, the business sector, international finance and heads of state from more than 50 countries gathered here from March 18 to 22 for a U.N. conference on aid for developing countries.

NGOs from more than 80 countries overwhelmingly rejected the conference's final declaration, known as the Monterrey Consensus, however, saying it doesn't take into account their proposals and will not meet the conference's goals.

For the first time, the U.N. International Conference on Financing for Development brought representatives from non-governmental organizations together with world leaders and global financial organizations, including the World Bank and the IMF.

The conference's professed goal, dating from the U.N. Millennium Summit, was to cut global poverty in half and provide universal education by 2015.

June Zeitlin, executive director of the Women's Environment and Development Organization, says the conference did bring together those concerned with the issues of poverty and economic inequality in an unprecedented way. "In that sense, the process was more open," she says. "Maybe that's why our expectations were higher that the results would reflect our input."

In rejecting the consensus, NGOs said that their criticisms of neoliberal economic development were not taken into account in the document. The consensus affirms free trade as one of the primary solutions to world poverty, echoing the statements of world leaders during the conference.

For this reason, Liliana Flores, a leader of the Barzon Debtors' movement, an anti-free trade organization from Mexico, decided not to attend the conference. Instead, she and her group demonstrated outside along with about 3,000 others, she says, to denounce "neoliberal policy as the

institutional policy for the world."

But many NGOs attending the conference knew their participation could be used to bring legitimacy to the consensus. "I think we are quite aware of the danger of being co-opted," says Zo Randriamaro, a program manager at the Third World Network in Ghana, "and ending up legitimizing something we are fighting against."

"We have to be clear that there's a very strong anti-globalization, anti-trade liberalization movement out there," says Mahau Pheko, coordinator of the International Gender and Trade Network in South Africa. "And I think we have to understand this conference in that context." The U.N. attempt to include civil society in its processes is not a genuine effort, Flores adds: "What they are trying to do is neutralize citizens' protests."

In what was also a first-time move, "roundtable" discussions were held at the conference to allow all those with a stake in a specific issue to converse face-to-face. Laura Frade, coordinator of the Women's Eyes on the Multilaterals Latin American Campaign, says she was able to add to "the national and international agenda a theme that was not there: democratizing the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank," and to secure specific victories. In response to her comments during a session, Horst Köhler, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, pledged to promote the participation of women on the IMF board.

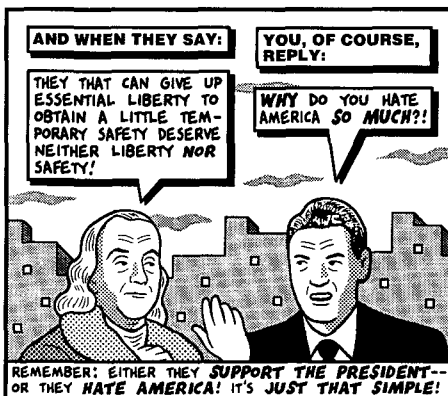
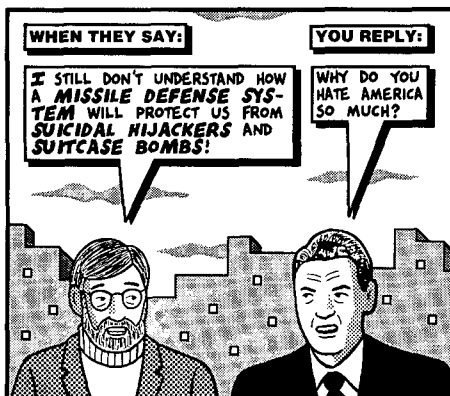
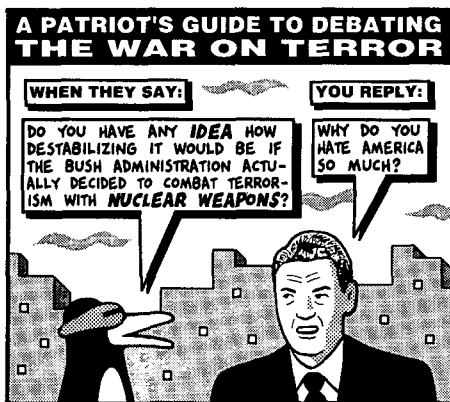
But others are still resistant to civil society's participation. Poul Nielson, head of Development and Humanitarian Aid for the European Commission, commented sharply that if NGOs want to play a role in a democracy, "they should get elected."

Still, NGOs say the Monterrey conference's inclusive format should be extended to future conferences, and organizers seem to agree. "We will never [again] do less than what has been done here," says Oscar de Rojas, the conference's executive coordinator. Aid and development organizations are already preparing for the next conference on sustainable development, which will take place in Johannesburg in August.

The last section of the Monterrey consensus, entitled "Staying engaged," sets guidelines for follow-up actions. NGOs, says Randriamaro of the Third World Network, are "staying engaged ... but not getting married." ■

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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Camping Out

Plan Colombia, globalization stir unrest in Ecuador

By Kari Lydersen

Hundreds of indigenous people, environmentalists and activists set up a "Permanent International Camp for Social Justice and Dignity of the Peoples" in Quito, the capital of Ecuador, in mid-March to protest the effects of Plan Colombia and globalization on the small Andean nation.

Protests and events were held in Lago Agrio on the Colombian border, at the U.S. military base in Manta and in other parts of the country, involving a slew of Ecuadorian indigenous and community groups as well as hundreds of activists from other parts of South America and the world.

The mainly peaceful March actions, which included teach-ins, demonstrations and caravans, are the latest in a wave of periodic mass mobilizations that have gone on in the country since plans to dollarize the economy were announced two years ago. Former President Jamil Mahuad's plans to make the U.S. dollar the official Ecuadorian currency sparked a brief coup on January 21, 2000, when a coalition of indigenous and military leaders backed by thousands of protesters deposed Mahuad and set up a short-



A protester shot in the leg during social justice demonstrations in Quito, Ecuador.

lived government. Less than 24 hours later, power was ceded to former Vice President Gustavo Noboa, who went through with the dollarization plan anyway.

Dissatisfaction and unrest have continued to grow since dollarization was imposed in September 2000, as real wages for most workers have fallen drastically and crime and unemployment have markedly increased.

Dollarization was intended to yank Ecuador out of a downward spiral of infla-

tion and devaluation—in 1999, the Ecuadorian sucre had lost 67 percent of its value, and its inflation rate had risen as high as 104 percent a year, the highest in Latin America. The government defaulted on much of its foreign debt in 1999, and for some time the country has been adhering to International Monetary Fund austerity measures, in return for a \$300 million loan approved in the spring of 2000 as part of a U.S.-backed plan for international aid.

Supreme Court Rules Against Poor People, Kids

Giving new meaning to the term "war on poverty," the Supreme Court ruled on March 26 that public housing residents can be evicted if anyone they're associated with is found in possession of drugs in or near their homes.

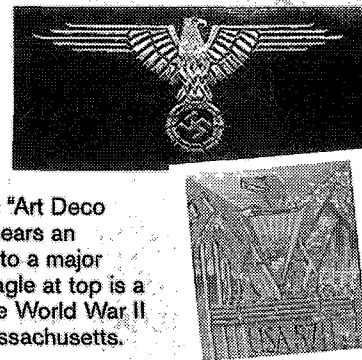
Public housing residents nationwide are required to sign a lease with a "zero-tolerance" policy, which has been irregularly enforced. One Oakland plaintiff in the case, a disabled 75-year-old man, was evicted after his caretaker was found in the man's apartment with cocaine. Another woman, a grandmother caring for several children, was evicted after her daughter was found in possession of marijuana three blocks from their home.

High school and junior high school students may have fewer and fewer rights as well. On March 19, the Supreme Court heard arguments challenging an Oklahoma school's requirement that all students involved in competitive extracurricular activities undergo random, unannounced drug testing. The Court is expected to issue a decision in coming weeks. In the 1995 case that first

opened the door to drug testing in schools, the Court voted 6-3 to allow drug testing for student athletes; observers expect the same will happen in this case in favor of the Pottawatomie County high school.

A Fascist Stamp?

Which one of these is a U.S. postal stamp, and which one a Nazi emblem? The U.S. Post Office has issued new 57-cent stamp (bottom) it calls "Art Deco Eagle," but the eagle bears an uncanny resemblance to a major Fascist symbol. The eagle at top is a Nazi sculpture from the World War II museum in Natick, Massachusetts.



—Kristie Reilly

David Turner, a Quito resident and former member of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, or CONAIE, an indigenous group involved in the coup, says incomes have plummeted since dollarization.

"Dollarization is a trick," he says. "The bankers and other speculators, in cahoots with the government, managed to bring the sucre down from 5,000 to the dollar to 25,000 [to the dollar] in the last four months of 1999. Someone making a monthly salary worth \$200 ended up being paid \$40."

While dollarization's effects on the economy as a whole have been mixed, indigenous, labor and environmental groups in the country see it as part of the overall trends of globalization and militarization having devastating effects on the country. Dollarization continues "the process of foreign indebtedness and

colonial dependency, with the long-known outcomes of poverty, social inequality and the concentration and exportation of wealth," says a communiqué issued by the organizing committee of the Permanent Camp.

The establishment of the Permanent Camp—so termed because organizers hope the camp will remain there for a long time—was preceded on March 12 by a protest rally of about 300 banana workers in the city of Guayaquil. The workers were demanding the reinstatement of 120 workers fired after a massive work stoppage on February 25, as well as the recognition of a union at Noboa Corp., a banana company owned by a relative of the current president. The Ecuadorian banana industry is 99 percent non-union, according to Joan Axthelm of the U.S. Labor Education in the Americas

Project. Ecuador's low wages and poor conditions depress standards for banana workers throughout Latin America, Axthelm says.

U.S. military involvement in the region has been particularly controversial. There has been significant opposition to the establishment of the U.S. base in the coastal city of Manta, and many blame the United States for fueling the civil war in Colombia and the spillover of violence and refugees into Ecuador. Lago Agrio, an idyllic town on the border with Colombia once home to both tourism and thriving indigenous culture, is now awash in violence and fear, according to indigenous activist Monica Chuy, who grew up in the area. "People are afraid to even go out after dark there now," she says. "It's so sad." ■

Cyborg Rights 2.3

If you pluck our electrodes, do we not bleed? That is the plaint of Steve Mann, engineering professor and cyborg.

In February, Mann was subjected to a three-day ordeal at the hands of airport security officers in Newfoundland as he attempted to board a flight home to Toronto. The guards apparently took a dim view of the many electronic doodads Mann had decked himself out with. Nor did they warm to his protest that his computer should not pass through an X-ray scanner. After some protracted haggling, security officials took Mann to be strip-searched, roughly tearing away equipment attached to his skin and, Mann claims, destroying some of it.

Mann was accoutered with a \$500,000 worth of cyborgalia at the time of the incident, according to the *New York Times*, and the University of Toronto professor claims that some \$56,000 worth was lost or destroyed. Now he's suing for compensation for the equipment as well as pain and suffering. Once security guards had disconnected and X-rayed his equipment, Mann claims, he became disoriented and passed out. He had to be trundled onto the plane in a wheelchair, and once back in Toronto he checked into a hospital.

In the million-dollar lawsuit Mann has filed against Air Canada, his lawyer will make the case that the professor's computerized glasses, headgear and electronic body suit were no mere eccentricities.

"Basically, we are going to argue Professor Mann was discriminated against because he is a cyborg," attorney Gary Neinstein told Canada's *National Post*. "I don't see the difference between showing up at the airport in a wearable computer, and showing up in a wheelchair. My client is a cyborg, not a terrorist."

Friendly Fire 7.9

An elaborate role-playing exercise for the U.S. Army Special Forces went tragically wrong in February, when a lieutenant was killed and a sergeant was gravely wounded by a local cop who hadn't gotten the memo about war games in the area.

The unfortunate soldiers were speeding down a country highway in a pickup in the piney hinterlands of North Carolina, accompanied by a local man, when they aroused the suspicion of Moore County Deputy Sheriff Randall Butler.

Butler pulled the truck over and ushered the local

man into the passenger seat of his cruiser. Returning to the pickup, the deputy got into a struggle with Lt. Tallas Tomeny and Sgt. Stephen Phelps, who were dressed in civilian clothes, over a backpack containing a disassembled automatic rifle. Deputy Butler drew his gun and used pepper spray on Tomeny, who, still believing the cop was in on the role playing, called out to Phelps to "get the gun, shoot him." Butler shot both men, killing Tomeny.

In the past, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, army officials relished the "bonus of realism" added to the exercises by run-ins with local police. But one local sheriff says he's had enough. "Our community supports the military," said Montgomery County Sheriff Jeff Jordan. "But our deputies can't afford to role-play with them."



TERRY LABA



APPALL-O-METER

By Dave Mulcahey

House arrest

Indigenous organizers jailed in Baja California

By David Bacon

BAJA CALIFORNIA, MEXICO—Leaders of a housing movement in the Mexican state of Baja California are being jailed by the state government in an effort to crack down on organizing, representatives for the movement say. Two of the state's best-known organizers of migrant farm workers are already in prison, and arrest warrants have been issued for as many as 18 others. Almost all are Mixtecs, Zapotecs and Triquis—indigenous communities of Oaxaca whose members make up Baja California's agricultural work force.

Last May, Beatriz Chavez, who has led the Independent Confederation of Farm Workers and Peasants (CIOAC) in the agricultural valley of San Quintin for the past two decades, was arrested and taken to a state prison in Ensenada. She has been jailed ever since. On December 12, another leading organizer and Triqui community leader, Julio Sandoval, was picked up in Maneadero, a farm town just south of Ensenada, and imprisoned.

Both Chavez and Sandoval are accused of leading illegal land occupations by homeless migrant workers. Chavez, the state says, led migrant workers from a local farmers settlement onto land owned by the government. Sandoval, an activist with the Independent Indigenous Movement for Unification and Struggle (MIULI), is accused of illegally trying to expand the acreage of a second settlement. Title to the land in question in both cases is murky, and land occupations, which have a long history in Mexico, were nominally legal until this year.

The real problem, activists say, is that racism against indigenous migrants has become official government policy. "There's a crisis of justice in Baja California," says Julio Cesar Alonso, another CIOAC leader whose name is on the arrest list. "The leaders of social movements in this state are being systematically jailed."

Baja California passed legislation in 1987 removing protections for land occupations and established a new agency, Inmobiliaria Estatal, to buy vacant land and make it available to poor residents for



DAVID BACON

Oaxacan residents of a farmers' camp in Baja California, Mexico.

housing. The system has never functioned properly. "It doesn't offer much," Alonso says, "and when it does, it levies high prices and high interest rates."

Since 1920, Mexican law has allowed vacant land belonging to the federal government to be used by those who have none. During the '70s, the government began implementing a series of economic reforms, pushed by the World Bank and international lenders, designed to make the country's economy more attractive to foreign investors.

At the same time, in the wake of the *bracero* program, which ended in 1964, *maquiladoras* began to proliferate in Tijuana, eventually drawing hundreds of thousands of workers up to the border. Tijuana now has more than 1 million inhabitants, and Mexicali, the second largest city in the state, isn't far behind. While the jobs attracted people to the border, hardly any housing was built to accommodate them.

In January 2002, Fox officially ended the practice of redistributing vacant land to the poor. His administration declared that land reform had failed to end rural poverty.

In Maneadero and the San Quintin Valley, thousands of workers are brought every year from poor Oaxacan villages to meet the needs of large growers. "While some workers can earn 80 pesos a day (about \$8) in the fields," says Domiciano Lopez, a San Quintin community organizer, "a kilo of meat costs 38 pesos in the

local market, half a day's wages. Families here eat meat once a month."

Most migrant families still live in labor camps and return home at the end of each harvest season. But they would like to escape the camps' miserable conditions, and even settle in Baja permanently. More than 20,000 landless families live in San Quintin, but in the eyes of state and local authorities, they are still strangers. "We've always had to live in the camps," Alonso says. "They just want us to work to make the ranchers wealthy, and then go back to Oaxaca."

In Maneadero and San Quintin, MIULI and CIOAC began pressing harder for more land. In December 1999, Olvaldo Medina y Olvera, a state official, led a violent expulsion of families from Graciano Sanchez Ejido, a local farmer settlement. Chavez was arrested with other organizers and beaten while in jail. Medina y Olvera was cited by the National Human Rights Commission for the incident, but was nevertheless recently appointed director of the Cereso prison where Chavez and Sandoval are incarcerated.

When the government still wouldn't act, this past spring activists sat in at municipal and state offices and blocked the main highway on the peninsula. The current wave of arrests soon followed. "Fighting for a decent wage and for the rights of migrant workers is not a crime in Mexico," says Rufino Dominguez, coordinator of the Oaxacan Indigenous Binational Front, "but they're trying to make it one." ■

Political Prisoners

By Kari Lydersen

At 59 years old, Robert King Wilkerson has spent most of his life—43 years—behind bars.

Wilkerson organized for better conditions at Angola State Penitentiary during the '70s with his compatriots Albert Woodfox and Herman Wallace. All three had been imprisoned on robbery convictions and were members of the only official prison chapter of the Black Panther Party, started at Angola by Woodfox and Wallace in 1971. Angola, an 18,000-acre former slave plantation, was considered the most brutal penitentiary in the country at the time.

As a result of their organizing, supporters say, the Angola Three spent almost 30 years in Angola's version of solitary confinement, Closed Cell Restricted, in which inmates are kept in their cells for 23 hours a day. Wilkerson was released from Angola last year on a plea bargain after a favorable U.S. District Court of Appeals ruling indicated he was on a path to eventual release; Wallace and Woodfox are still in solitary confinement at Angola.

The ACLU, which has filed a lawsuit charging cruel and unusual punishment on behalf of the three men, says it is the longest such confinement in U.S. history. "The reason they put them in solitary is that they were Black Panthers," says Jed Stone, a civil rights lawyer who has worked on the case. "They didn't want the Black Panther Party in the general population of the prison."

Even from their solitary cells, the Angola Three organized to stop prisoner rape and worked to improve race relations between inmates. They carried out hunger strikes of 30 days or more demanding better conditions, and won a court ruling granting them yard privileges, which had previously been denied.

The three also staged a protest over the mandatory rectal searches performed each time they called their lawyers. "They would take you out in handcuffs and shackles and watch you the whole time, and then they'd still force you to undress and do the examination," Wilkerson says. "We said it was akin to slavery."

Wilkerson involvement in hunger strikes led him to spend separate stints of one and two years in the dreaded "Camp G" punitive unit, where prisoners were sequestered without light, heat, toilet facilities or even a mattress or blanket.

Wallace and Woodfox were convicted of the 1972 murder of a prison guard, and, in 1973, Wilkerson was convicted of the murder of another inmate. In both cases, according to the ACLU and prison records, the convictions were based entirely on the testimony of other prison inmates, all of whom were either paid or threatened into testifying, and no physical evidence linked them to the crimes. All three men were sentenced to life without parole, in addition to their original sentences.

According to prison records, Hezekiah Brown testified against Woodfox and Wallace in the 1971 trial in exchange for a carton of cigarettes per week and cash bribes. In Wilkerson's case, Grady Brewer, his co-defendant in the original 1973

Disturbing Product Department

By Frances Cerra Whittelsey and Kathy Jones

Product Description BellyWashers "100% Vitamin C" drink for kids, with zany Saturday-morning cartoon heads on every bottle!

Price \$1.99 to \$2.99 for 12 ounces.

Bonus Points Washes your child's belly with sugar and water and something called cochineal. Oh yeah, and "100% Vitamin C," so parents won't feel guilty about giving their offspring 12 ounces of "liquid candy."

Extra Special Bonus Points Cochineal is a red dye made of dried insects—100 percent gross!

Company Defense "The 'liquid Pez' experience kids have been waiting for," says Atlanta-based In Zone Brands. But have our wee consumers really been waiting? In defending its concoction, In Zone said: "BellyWashers shares the same ingredients as many of the most popular fruit-flavored drinks on the market today." Translation: Since everybody is trying to turn children into "liquid Pez" drinkers, that makes it OK.

The Bigger Picture The Center for Science in the Public Interest released a report some time ago called "Liquid Candy: How Soft Drinks are Harming Americans' Health." The report deplored the 40 percent drop in milk consumption during the past 20 years by teens who, meanwhile, have ratcheted up their consumption of soda pop.

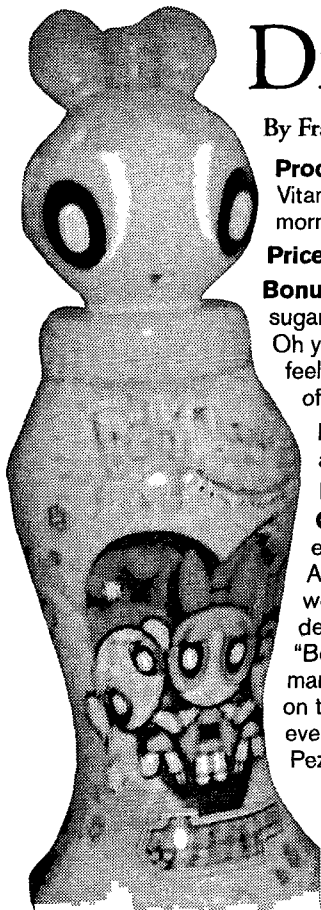
In addition to a host of other possible adverse health effects, the report spoke darkly about a future generation of women plagued by an epidemic of osteoporosis. It seems that human bones are built in childhood and adolescence, with 92 percent of their mass in place by age 18. If girls haven't consumed enough calcium by then, too bad. They're destined to break vertebrae, hips, etc.

Maybe, like smokers, moms need to see a warning on the label of creations like In Zone's: "Caution: This product should not be consumed by children in place of milk. Overuse can lead to obesity, soft bones and tooth decay."

Verdict A 2002 version of Kool-Aid, with a dose of vitamin C, packaged to attract proto-consumers, children so young they're just learning to tell a dime from a quarter.

Let In Zone know what you think. E-mail the company at csharkey@in-zone.com.

© Frances Cerra Whittelsey and Kathy Jones



trial, testified in 1997 that he alone had killed inmate August Kelly. Wilkerson was told by prison officials in periodic reviews that he remained in solitary because he was "under investigation." He never knew why. In the '70s, a review panel accidentally revealed that he had been under investigation for the murder of the same guard. Wallace and Woodfox were convicted of killing in 1972—even though it happened several days before his arrival at Angola.

In the mid-'90s, a federal panel granted Wilkerson a new trial and appointed Chris Aberle as his lawyer. Eventually, the court ruled that there was significant evidence of innocence in Wilkerson's case, but no constitutional violations, which would have been necessary to secure his release. After much legal wrangling, Aberle worked out a plea bargain for Wilkerson's release. "I didn't want to accept it because I am innocent," Wilkerson says, "but at the urging of Albert and Herman and my supporters, I decided to."

On February 8, 2001, Wilkerson walked out a free man. But, he says, "Angola will never be free of me." He has dedicated himself to traveling the country, even the world, advocating for prisoners'

rights and for those he left behind. In Chicago, at an event at the King Solomon's Mines Rastafarian cultural center, he met Fred Hampton Jr. and Akua Njeri, son and widow of murdered Black Panther Fred Hampton.

"As far as I'm concerned, we aren't former members of the Black Panthers, we are Black Panthers," he says. "I'll spend the rest of my time on this planet in this struggle. There are so many more wrongfully incarcerated at Angola and around the country. First it's free the Angola Three, then the Angola 30, then the Angola 300, then the Angola 3,000."

The ACLU case is still making its way through the courts. On April 17, Wallace and Woodfox will mark 30 years in solitary confinement. ■



Robert King Wilkerson with Fred Hampton Jr. and Akua Njeri at a benefit in Chicago.

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The West Wing's Workaholics

By Susan J. Douglas

On Wednesday nights, like millions of Americans swimming upstream to a vision of a presidency marked by intelligence, I tune into *The West Wing*.

The show has been something of a phenomenon in this age of niche marketing and defections to cable channels: a network program not about teenagers routinely ranked in the top 10, right behind *Friends* and *E.R.* Winner of multiple Emmy and Golden Globe awards, *The West Wing* is one of those shows that prompts appointment viewing: Fans carve out time for it every week and are loath to miss it. Why is this show—which is, after all, about politics and public policy and not mud wrestling or eating live scorpions—such a hit?

Quick answers include great writing, great acting and the desire to pretend, if for only one hour a week, that the White House is not filled with ignorant, mean-spirited, moronic, war-mongering lackeys of corporate America. And this might, in and of itself, probably be enough. Yes, there were those awful moments at the end of the show, especially in the first and second seasons, when the patriotic music soared and someone—usually President Bartlet—rhapsodized about the beauty of the Bill of Rights and the vast wisdom of the American political process. But even this we were willing to swallow in exchange for the conceit that the president was an expert in 17th-century cartography. It didn't hurt that the show routinely attacked the religious right, the NRA, Dr. Laura and the tobacco industry.

But I think the show also speaks powerfully to people whose leisure time continues to shrink, people who live, day-in and day-out, with speed-up at work. *The West Wing* absolutely celebrates, fetishizes, if you will, workaholism. Overwork is made to seem exciting and glamorous. Watch the way the camera moves. People in the *West Wing*—because they're so important—are always walking at a brisk pace up and down the halls, in and out of offices, in groups of at least two, and the tracking cameras virtually jog to keep up with them. Doors swing open and shut.

Phones ring constantly in the background, just above the general din of important-sounding work.

Unlike the multi-tasking we grunts are stuck with—chained to our desks, often alone, reading e-mail while listening to voice mail and on hold with automated phone information centers—this *West Wing* work happens in motion, on the fly:



It's almost breathless. The pace and editing alone confirm that working constantly is enviable and thrilling.

The show's dialogue gives new meaning to the term snappy patter. These people don't just talk a mile a minute, peppering each other with policy positions, quotations and statistics. They're witty, too, as if Letterman's writing staff was feeding them one-liners through an earphone. This too glamorizes the work of political insiders. Their unflagging agility at verbal jousting and affectionate, rapid-fire insults implies intellectual quickness and a deep camaraderie with their colleagues (two things that may be lacking in your own place of employment).

When Josh can't answer a series of questions Mandy puts to him, she asks with mock condescension, "What is it you do here, exactly?"

"It's never been made clear to me," he retorts.

"There's a fire in Yellowstone Park," Sam tells Josh as they rush down a hall.

"So put it out," Josh deadpans.

Josh walks into work early one morning to discover his assistant Donna working. "Were you here all night?" he asks.

"Is it daytime?" she shoots back. "Usually when I'm up all night, I'm able to pass a 19th-century English literature midterm."

And so on. Everybody is relentlessly arch.

During the commercial breaks, we see ads for companies like Pacific Life. They are silent and repeatedly show the word "performance" while we see athletes jumping or diving, intercut with whales surfacing and diving. Individual drive, determination, discipline, that's what leads to success. And that's the message being sold to us by *The West Wing* and its sponsors.

Now, given the right-wing takeover of almost all public-affairs programming on the tube, I am indeed grateful for a show in which liberal (occasionally even progressive) politics seem utterly reasonable, and usually superior to conservatism. It's also refreshing, given the rampant anti-intellectualism of our media environment, to see a show in which being well-read, knowledgeable and smart are all advantages at work and in life.

But what the media giveth with one hand, they taketh away with the other, and I've come to recognize that media fare I enjoy usually has retrograde ideological sludge lurking someplace deep within. *The West Wing* is no exception.

Millions of us have, over the past 15 years, been asked to do a lot more at work in exactly the same amount of time, often with fewer resources. This speed-up has

The show celebrates liberal politics—but it absolutely fetishizes workaholism.

often been accompanied, and made possible, by downsizing and layoffs. It also imposes enormous stress on family and personal life. But we're supposed to feel that the busier we are, the more important we are, and tough shit for those out there without a job.

The West Wing celebrates liberal politics and even, at times, social justice. Yet it also canonizes the expectation that staying late at work is more important than going to your kid's science fair—or even seeing an old friend.

I think we all want to pretend for an hour a week that overwork is glamorous and exhilarating; it makes many of us feel better about our own overtime. Let's just not lose sight of what else is getting legitimated as well. ■

IMF: This Time It's Personal

By Naomi Klein

On March 12 in Buenos Aires, only a few blocks from where Argentine President Eduardo Duhalde was negotiating with the International Monetary Fund, a group of residents was going through a negotiation of a different kind. To protect themselves from an eviction order, the residents of 335 Ayacucho, including 19 children, barricaded themselves inside and refused to leave. On the concrete façade of the house, a hand-printed sign said: "IMF Go To Hell."

What does the IMF, in town to set conditions for releasing \$9 billion in promised funds, have to do with the fate of the residents of 335 Ayacucho? Well, here in a country where half the population now lives below the poverty line, it's hard to find a single sector of society whose fate does not somehow hinge on the decisions made by the international lender.

Librarians, teachers and other public sector workers, who have been getting paid in hastily printed provincial currencies (a sort of government IOU) won't get paid at all if the provinces agree to stop printing this money, as the IMF is demanding. And if deeper cuts are made to the public sector, as the lender is also insisting, unemployed workers—20 to 30 percent of population—will have even less protection from the homelessness and hunger that have led tens of thousands to storm supermarkets demanding food.

And if a solution isn't found to the "medical state of emergency" declared this week, it will certainly affect an elderly woman I met recently on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. In a fit of shame and desperation, she pulled up her blouse and showed a group of foreigners the open wound and hanging tubes from a stomach operation that her doctor was unable to stitch up or dress due to lack of medical supplies.

Maybe it seems rude to talk about such matters in the context of the IMF visit. Economic analysis is supposed to be about the peg to the dollar and the dangers of "stagflation"—not families losing homes and gaping wounds. Yet reading the advice that the world business community is hurling at the IMF and Argentine government, perhaps a little personalizing is in order.

Argentina has been scolded like a small child who shouldn't get dessert until she finishes dinner. Despite a commitment to slash 60 percent from provincial deficits, it apparently hasn't done enough to "deserve" a loan. The consensus is that the IMF should see the crisis not as an obstacle but as an opportunity: Argentina is so desperate for cash, it will do whatever the IMF wants.



The most draconian suggestion comes from Ricardo Cabellero and Rudiger Dornbusch, a pair of MIT economists writing in the *Financial Times*. "It is time to get radical," they say. Argentina "must temporarily surrender its sovereignty on all financial issues ... [for] say five years." The country's economy should be controlled by "foreign agents," including "a board of experienced foreign central bankers."

In a nation still scarred by the "disappearance" of 30,000 people from 1976 to 1983, only a "foreign agent" would have the nerve to say, as the MIT team does, that "somebody has to run the country with a tight grip." And that, with the Argentines out of way, the country could be saved by prying open markets, introducing deep spending cuts, and, of course, a "massive privatization campaign."

It's obvious to anyone who has been paying attention to Argentina's social upheavals that such an economic dictatorship could only be enforced through terrifying state repression and bloodshed. But there's another hitch: Argentina has already done it all.

As the IMF's model student throughout the '90s, it flung open its economy (that's why it has been so easy for capital to flee since the crisis began). As far as its supposedly wild public spending, a full third goes directly to servicing the external debt. Another third goes to pension funds,

which have already been privatized. The remaining third is for health, education and social assistance. Far from spiraling out of control, these expenditures have fallen far behind population growth, which is why shipments of donated food and medicine are arriving by boat from Spain. As for "massive privatization," Argentina has dutifully sold off so many of its services, from trains to phones, that the only examples of further assets Cabellero and Dornbusch can think of privatizing are the country's ports and customs offices.

Argentina's housewives have a better idea. On International Women's Day, hundreds took to the streets with brooms in hand, announcing that they wouldn't clean their homes until they had swept out the corruption. Their protest was one tiny wave in a massive tide of grassroots mobilization that has already brought down successive governments and now is threatening to do something far more radical: bring in real democracy.

Following the model started by Argentina's militant unemployed, tens of thousands of residents are organizing themselves into neighborhood assemblies, networked at the city and national levels. In town squares, parks and on

Argentina shouldn't be begging for loans. It should be demanding reparations.

street corners, neighbors discuss ways of making their democracies more accountable and filling in where government has failed. They are talking about creating a "citizens' congress" to demand transparency and accountability from politicians. They are discussing participatory budgets and shorter political terms, while organizing communal kitchens for the unemployed and planning film festivals in the streets. These *asambleas* are also talking about how to kick-start local industries and re-nationalize assets. And they could go even further.

Argentina, as the obedient pupil for decades, miserably failed by its IMF professors, shouldn't be begging for loans. It should be demanding reparations. ■

LOCAL MOTION

BY CALEB MASON

PEDAL REVOLUTION

WITH THE SUCCESSFUL HUDSON RIVER GREENWAY, NEW YORK'S PLANNERS AND CITIZENS ARE REDISCOVERING THE VIRTUES OF CAR-FREE PUBLIC SPACE

Next time you're in New York, get on your bike downtown at Chambers Street and ride north along the river on the wide, separated bike lane in the city's sparkling new Hudson River Greenway. Gaze out at the gray sweep of the Hudson, accessible now to pedestrians on the West Side of Manhattan for the first time in decades. Breeze past backed-up traffic at 57th Street. Head into a stretch of grass-covered riverfront parkland full of pickup basketball, sunbathers and strolling couples. Until last year, all this was a crumbling wasteland of trash and construction debris, decaying and disused piers, dump sites and parking lots.

What a wonderland of public space this is, and what a validation of the bicycle as an urban transit alternative: The bike trip from downtown to the Upper West Side is fast and smooth, rivaling even the express trains door-to-door. The European-style Hudson River Greenway, unique among American cities, makes the bike a functional part of the city's transportation—rather than just recreation—infrastructure.

But just as you turn into the park, look across the highway at the corner of 57th Street. A BMW billboard leers down at you with a Thatcher-esque sneer: "Stop Dreaming. Start Driving." But looking up and down the open riverfront and the throngs of New Yorkers savoring a taste of unimpeded public space, you detect a note of defensiveness in the sign, perhaps even fear.

For the past century, the built environment of U.S. cities and suburbs has been so thoroughly dominated by the car that we scarcely can think of it as domination. It's one of those daylight expropriations that, by sheer chutzpah, metamorphoses from brazen robbery into natural right. Thus it takes some imagination to see the greenway as less a pleasant park and bike path than a radical experiment in the restructuring of urban land use, a transformative vision of a wholly different way of living.

Of course, the bike is already a part of the transit mix in New York. Each day, 100,000 people take to the streets on two wheels, according to the advocacy group Transportation Alternatives. But beyond the greenway, the city provides no space



TERRY LABAN

for bike use on its streets besides a handful of narrow painted strips that are ignored by drivers and piddle out after a few blocks. Banned (sensibly) from sidewalks, bikers must negotiate a few perilous inches between cars—parked cars, turning cars, aggressive cars, unseeing and violent cars—making each foray into traffic an adrenaline-charged, heart-pounding dance with death. There are more than 4,000 serious car-related injuries to New York bikers each year, according to the New York State DMV.

But hey, if you can't handle the traffic, stay out of the street, right? In the United States, we take it for granted that streets are meant for cars, that the purpose of urban planning is to move as many cars through the streets as quickly as possible. In fact, this "modern" view of city planning is quite new. It was imposed on a resistant urban public in the first decades of the 20th century, as car-enthralled planners, celebrated figures like Le Corbusier, Frank

Lloyd Wright and—decisively for New York—Robert Moses, championed a vision of the city as “a race track and geometric fantasy for car owners ... provid[ing] high speeds and imperial vistas for drivers,” writes Clay McShane in *Down the Asphalt Path*.

To clear the streets for drivers as car use expanded, New York even instituted “anti-play” legislation. “The police initially arrested children who violated the new anti-play rules,” McShane writes, “forcing their parents to go to the precinct station to bail them out.”

In the ensuing century, streets were widened, parking expanded, corners rounded, so that the vast majority of the open public space in the city is now off limits—on pain of death—to the vast majority of the city’s residents. Even in their houses, city dwellers cannot escape the effects of the car’s insatiable appetite for space. Highways function as highly effective moats; the perils of crossing them are evident in the flattened carcasses that line their shoulders (for many of us, the only glimpse we get of the native fauna). When they are forcibly inserted into neighborhoods, they provide instant barriers that often track socioeconomic divides. The Gowanus Expressway in Brooklyn, for example, cuts off Red Hook, with its public housing projects, from fashionable Carroll Gardens.

When highways are built along waterfronts, as is Manhattan’s West Side Highway, they act like tourniquets, cutting off access to what otherwise would be heavily used public space. For city dwellers, a retreat from the noise, heat and claustrophobia of packed streets and apartments is a crucial element in physical and psychological well-being. Parks are irreplaceable social resources, an important defense against the obesity, heart disease, diabetes, asthma and social alienation endemic among urban working classes, who can’t zip out to the Hamptons when the swelter and stress of the city get too overpowering.

But to the city planners who have for generations poured concrete for the convenience of suburban commuters, city-dwelling pedestrians were all but invisible. The West Side Highway is a perfect example of the dialectical nature of consumer “convenience.” A convenience to drivers who want to cross the George Washington Bridge and rapidly cruise downtown is an uncrossable chasm to the city’s far more numerous pedestrians.

This is a manifestation of the general tendency under capitalism for public goods to be expropriated, privatized, chopped up and finally marketed as individual commodities, to be consumed as substitutes for the lost public resource. Thus we buy a suburban lawn, an air filter, bottled water and a steady diet of TV and drugs, in an attempt to meliorate a physical and cultural environment made unliveable by the privatization or befoulment of public resources. But the private commodities don’t replace what was lost, and their charms are doled out with profound inequality, leaving many people out entirely and reducing a community to a collection of distrustful, competing atoms stuck in a traffic jam leading to a rat’s nest of identical chain-link cages protecting sacred squares of grass.

This is why the Hudson River Greenway—along with its chronically unfinished brethren in Brooklyn and the Bronx—is so important. It offers a model of another kind of public life. Such models are crucial for any progressive critique of prevailing social institutions, especially car use, which has been successfully cast by the auto industry as a “lifestyle choice.” As Therol Brown, executive director of the Georgia Highway

Contractors Association—the people who’ve helped make Atlanta one of our national leaders in highway congestion, length of daily commute, obesity and smog—puts it: “If people don’t want to drive automobiles, fine—but that’s a personal choice. Don’t let it be forced on people by public policy.”

But of course, it’s anything but a personal choice: Car use is made possible only by an unprecedented expenditure of public money, labor and land. Driving is, for all practical purposes, compulsory in places—most of the United States outside New York and a few other urban centers—where low densities, zoning laws separating residential and commercial land use, and lack of mass transit make the car necessary for even the most trivial errands. And car use squeezes out other “personal choices”: Try riding your bike down a busy suburban highway with no bike lane, and you’ll see why so few people “choose” to do it. Indeed, the large number of riders who brave harassment, threats and brushes with death each day in New York suggests a vast public demand for bike-able space.

I think this demand is latent in drivers, too. On the last Friday of every month, hundreds of bikers gather at Union Square in late afternoon for a group ride called Critical Mass. Together they take to the streets and ride through Midtown Manhattan for an hour or so. The name is apt: With this many bikes riding together, car traffic ceases. The streets are made suddenly quiet, friendly, lines of cars waiting at cross streets as the bikes pass by. What always amazes me on these rides is that stalled drivers rarely seem angry: They don’t hurl violent imprecations of the sort bikers have long grown accustomed to. Instead, I’ve seen an astonishing number of smiles and thumbs-up.

This reaction makes sense, if you talk to drivers about their commute. Hardly any suburbanite likes commuting to work in a car; they mostly hate it and only do it, they say, because there aren’t any alternatives—none, at least, that they find palatable.

TO SUBURBANITES CRAWLING DOWN THE WEST SIDE HIGHWAY, THE PARALLEL GREENWAY IS A DAILY REMINDER THAT THEIR COMMUTE COULD BE DRASTICALLY DIFFERENT.

They’ve internalized the structural narrowing of horizons. But for suburban dwellers driving into the city and down the West Side Highway to work, the parallel greenway is a daily reminder that there are alternatives, that the world could—in this small way at least—be organized differently.

And the more we see such models in front of us, the more likely we are to ask: Couldn’t we add separated bike lanes to Broadway? Couldn’t we close the drives in Prospect Park and Central Park—both now used as high-speed rush hour commuting routes? Couldn’t we limit street parking, institute permanent “play street” policies on crosstown residential blocks? In short, couldn’t we drastically curtail the century-long expropriation of our urban public space for driving and parking, and let New York’s 8 million residents have their city’s land back? ■

Caleb Mason has left New York for Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan, where he is assistant professor of humanities and philosophy at Lake Superior State University. He can still be reached by e-mail at cem20@columbia.edu.

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the global
economy and
help the poor.
So who's
against it?

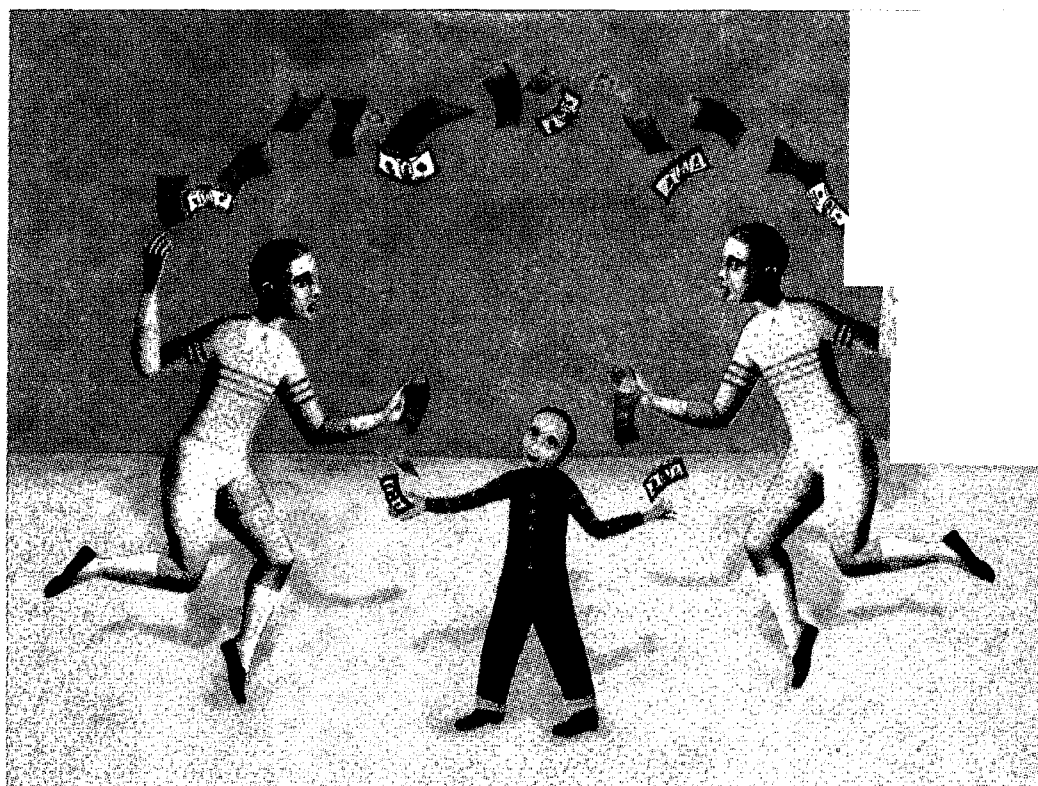
By David Moberg

The poor nations of the world came away from the March U.N. conference on development in Monterrey, Mexico with little more than modest pledges of increased aid. Worse, through both the conference declarations and the conditions Bush will attach to future aid, the United States continues to impose the discredited "Washington consensus" of deregulated trade and finance on all developing countries.

This one-size-fits-all strategy is precisely what Harvard economist Dani Rodrik warned against last October in a report to the U.N. Development Program. Local development strategies, he argued persuasively, are more important for growth than adhering to free trade dogma, and integration into the global economy is an outcome of successful development, not its prerequisite.

In the run-up to the conference, some citizens groups and governments had proposed alternative strategies for development that the United States shot down. One of the most promising was an idea first proposed 30 years ago by Nobel prize-winning economist James Tobin, who died in March. Tobin was concerned, even back then, about growing short-term speculation in the value of currencies, and about the corrosive effect of currency trading on the ability of governments and central banks to set broad economic policy. He proposed imposing a tiny tax—perhaps one-hundredth of a percent—on each transaction to discourage much of the buying and selling of various currencies to profit from small discrepancies in prices in the global money market.

The idea initially got little attention from economists. But as currency trading exploded, and global financial crises grew more frequent and damaging, interest renewed in the "Tobin tax." Advocates for poor countries envisioned that revenue from such a tax could be used to finance sustainable development. But legislation first pushed through Congress in 1996 by Republican



Sens. Jesse Helms and Bob Dole would prohibit U.S. contributions to the United Nations if it were to impose a tax on Americans. That threat, added to Washington's considerable clout at the international financial institutions, has kept the Tobin tax out of international policy debate. In Monterrey, the only mention of it came from Fidel Castro.

Yet the idea of a currency-transaction tax has inched into the policy mainstream. After the 1997 Asian crisis, a broad-based French movement for alternatives to corporate globalization—ATTAC—originated with support for a Tobin tax and has since spread throughout much of Europe. Even in the United States, which lacks an ATTAC equivalent, Tobin-style taxes have been endorsed by a few think tanks, development advocates, the AFL-CIO and assorted academics. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-Oregon) and Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minnesota) introduced a congressional resolution endorsing a Tobin tax in April 2000.

The Tobin tax also has been endorsed by French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, the French and Canadian parliaments, and hundreds of economists and legislators around the world. The European Parliament came within one vote of approval, and a new multi-party resolution of support was recently introduced in the British Parliament. A February study prepared at the request of the German development minister concluded that the tax could be feasibly implemented. Opinion polls, from Finland to the United States, show strong popular support for the idea.

The development of the global economy over the past three decades has given credibility to Tobin's idea. Daily trading in foreign exchange has grown by more than 15 times to nearly \$1.5 trillion a day (even more when currency futures and other related financial derivatives are included). To put that in perspective, the volume of all trade in goods and services in a year is equal in dollar terms to just a few days of currency trading. Roughly 80 percent of that trading is short-term, with currency bought and resold within a week, often within minutes. Very little of this serves international trade. Nearly all of it is speculative, or else it involves hedging—that is, seeking protection—against the currency instability that the trading system itself exacerbates.

This is a huge waste of time and resources. More important, as the volume and ease of trading grow, the market becomes less rational and efficient. A herd mentality takes over. As Thomas Palley of the AFL-CIO notes, much of the short-term trading is based on "noise" in the system—not solid fundamental analysis—that can trigger larger trends that feed on themselves. Currency values swing far out of relation to underlying economic fundamentals. Central banks and governments are easily swamped in efforts to defend currency values or to maintain macroeconomic policies—such as setting interest rates or budget targets—against this electronic herd.

As a result, a growing number of major financial crises—like the 1997 Asian meltdown that spread to Russia and beyond—have devastated hundreds of millions of poor people. Bailing out banks and international investors in these crises to avoid even greater damage to the global financial system has been costly to citizens of richer nations. And to protect themselves from speculative attacks, central banks have held onto increasing reserves of hard currencies, depriving governments in poor countries of resources they need for investment in development.

Since speculative activity involves many large-scale, short-term trades that focus on extremely small differences in currency prices, even a tiny tax could make such trading uneconomic without interfering with the currency trading needed for normal business. Yet even as it depresses speculative trading, a tiny tax could still generate substantial revenue—well over \$100 billion a year globally, roughly double all current development aid.

Could such a global tax be imposed? Could it be easily evaded? Would it work?

Over the past few years, a burst of new research has demonstrated that a Tobin tax is quite feasible. Bowing to national sovereignty, most proposals now assume that individual countries would impose the tax on transactions in their own currencies, and they would collect the revenue. Since the currency-trading regime has become increasingly computerized and centralized, especially in its system for settling trades, it has become much easier to impose and collect the tax, regardless of where the trade takes place. (Transactions by a

currency trader, whether in London or the Cayman Islands, would still have to be settled through a centralized system.) Furthermore, beyond the baseline small tax, the system could also be set up to trigger higher taxes whenever the volume or volatility of trading increases beyond some normal level. This second-tier tax would give countries another tool, besides raising domestic interest rates to astronomical levels, to counter speculative currency attacks.

Ideally, this system would be set up as part of a global, coordinated action, but recent research concludes that not every country needs to participate for a currency transaction tax to work. It would be most important to involve the few countries that dominate the global currency markets (and which would also reap the greatest revenues). In this model, there would have to be an additional political battle, domestically and globally, to steer that revenue to progressive ends, such as sustainable development. But if countries move toward more broad-based taxes on financial transactions, such as futures and stock trading, it might be easier to argue that global currency-trading taxes should be targeted toward reducing global inequality, which—besides being unjust—depresses economic growth and fosters political instability.

What difference would a Tobin tax make for the global economy? It would dampen short-term speculation in currencies and reduce the likelihood of financial crises. As a result, global development would be more steady and capital flows more oriented toward long-term investment. It would give national governments more independence in managing their economies, which would help both rich and poor countries alike. It also would provide new revenue raised in a progressive fashion, with at least some ideally going to redress global inequality.

But a Tobin tax by itself would not remake the global economy. Since the cost of trading has plummeted over the past 30 years, the taxes under discussion might only restore trading volume and volatility to the level of the '80s, which had already surpassed the level that initially worried Tobin. It would not protect national economies from all external financial pressures nor from their own mismanagement. "It's best not to think of the Tobin tax as the only solu-

tion," argues Rodney Schmidt, a Tobin tax expert formerly with the Canadian government. "I prefer to think of it as an additional instrument in the government tool kit."

What's clear is that, as a tool, the Tobin tax could work. The only things standing in its way—and these are no small obstacles—are the overwhelming power of the global financial industry and the lack of both a popular political movement and the political will of governmental elites to do what's right for the world. ■

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Left Behind

Little has changed for the women of Afghanistan.
But one group is fighting back.

Kristie Reilly interviews RAWA's Sahar Saba

The American media and the Pentagon have trumpeted the collapse of the Taliban and the “liberation” of Afghanistan, but for the Afghan people, conditions have not changed. Indeed, they may be getting worse.

The Afghan refugee and humanitarian crisis continues: Billions have been promised in foreign aid, but little of it has reached Afghanistan. An official from the U.N. Population Fund says the relief effort, to succeed, must be conducted on an unprecedented scale. “It is larger than Kosovo,” he says. “In Kosovo, there were 1.5 million people, and in Afghanistan there are 20 million.” In a country that has one doctor for every 50,000 people, the overall mortality rate has doubled since August.

International peacekeeping troops, stationed in Kabul, have been able to maintain a measure of security in the city's streets. But outside Kabul, there are no peacekeeping forces, and regional warlords still rule. Infighting between rival warlords and vicious attacks on civilians have continued throughout the U.S. bombing campaign. In short, Afghanistan is on the verge of civil war.

What's more, the Interim Authority—the provisional government agreed upon in Bonn, Germany last December—is packed with warlords from the Northern Alliance, who ruled the country with impunity before the Taliban. During their rule, a number of these same Northern Alliance leaders perpetrated crimes so atrocious that some say they make Bosnia look like a “sideshow.”

In contrast to all of this, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, or RAWA, continues to fight for secular democracy in Afghanistan, as it has since its founding in 1977. In

the face of massive repression from the Northern Alliance and the Taliban after it, RAWA has operated secretly, under threat of death, to support full freedoms and rights for Afghan women. Today, RAWA still runs income-generating projects for women, schools for children and mobile health care units, both within Afghanistan and in the refugee camps at the Afghan-Pakistan border.

RAWA is one of the only groups vocally condemning the Interim Authority. To them it represents no improvement over the Taliban. The past crimes perpetrated by Northern Alliance members that RAWA describes are hard to hear, let alone comprehend: Raping entire families—mothers, daughters and sons—before killing them and looting their possessions. Driving six-inch nails through the skulls of ethnic minorities. Broiling those same minorities alive in metal canisters. The gang rape of children. One of RAWA's current campaigns is to bring these war criminals—many of whom are now considered U.S. allies—to justice in an international court.

The lives of RAWA members are still in danger, and they still work in secret, under assumed names. Sahar Saba, a RAWA representative, has traveled to many countries in the past several years to speak on behalf of Afghan women. Saba was born in Kabul; in 1979, her family fled Afghanistan to the refugee camps in Pakistan to escape the Soviet invasion. Once in Pakistan, they moved again to give her an education at one of RAWA's underground schools. Now in her mid-twenties, Saba serves on RAWA's foreign affairs committee.

In These Times spoke with Saba during her visit to Chicago in March.

The press hasn't told us very much about the activities of the interim government or the U.S. offensive in Afghanistan. Can you describe the current conditions there?

Especially in the West, the image is that everything is fine, or is going to be fine. We hope, we wish that it was so, but it is not: The reality is different, especially for women. Resolving these problems will take years and years.

People think that everything changed after the Taliban collapsed. ... But thousands and thousands of women are still under a lot of pressure from the government, from those who are ruling Afghanistan. Most of those who are now in the government, they are responsible for violating the very basic rights of women. So it's really not surprising for Afghan women that this new government, especially the people in the Northern Alliance, still don't give them those basic rights. ...

Most importantly, there is no guarantee of security for women. Even if they say that women can go out, they would not, because who can guarantee if she goes out what will happen? This is the biggest problem, not only in Kabul, but in all parts of Afghanistan. And they continue the fighting, these warlords, to get more power. And the U.S. bombs are still falling, which is another big concern for Afghan women—because they are again the victims. They have lost their family members, they have lost their homes, they have lost whatever it is they have.

What is daily life like for women in Afghanistan now?

The daily life for Afghan women has not really changed. This is true of the restrictions the Taliban imposed on women—it has not been announced by the government officially that those restrictions are no longer there. ... But the conditions of life for most Afghan women are the same. The economic problems—they don't have work, they don't have jobs. Widows, for example, are trying very hard to survive. ...

The medical problems and the health problems are still there. We don't have many doctors, because from 1990 to now there was no proper education. Then, even if we had doctors, we don't have the proper equipment. At this moment, there are many, women and children especially, who are suffering—or even die—simply because there is no proper health system in Afghanistan, and they cannot afford to see a doctor or come to Pakistan to see a doctor. ...

And the war is still going on. The fighting is still going on. The warlords are there on the streets. They have guns. If you raise your voice in protest, if you ask for your rights, if you ask, why don't I have the right to have work, or I want something to feed my children or my family, and the rulers don't like it, they can do anything.

This is the interim government?

Yes, this is the interim government. This is what RAWA is trying hard to make the world understand. ... From the beginning, when they were talking about the formation of this government, there were a lot of doubts, a lot of criticism—not only from RAWA, but from a large number of women and from other people, people who were never given the chance to be heard. The most important reason for all this criticism was the involvement of criminals who only deserve to be brought to an international court of law for what they have done, and don't deserve to rule Afghanistan again. ...

You're speaking of members of the Northern Alliance?

The Northern Alliance destroyed everything. I always say that for the Taliban, there was nothing left really to destroy—just to impose those harsh and inhuman restrictions on women. Everything was destroyed during the Northern Alliance's time. That was the reason that RAWA opposed them, will always oppose them and will never compromise with them.

They are responsible for the atrocities, for the crimes, for the destruction of Afghanistan. They not only destroyed us physically—we may forget about the 50,000 people killed during their infighting from 1992 to 1996—but they destroyed our future. An entire generation of Afghan children didn't have access to education, to health care, to entertainment—they are a generation of war, of destruction, of atrocities. And I consider myself one of them.

So how can we trust those leaders, those criminals? They were the first to call democracy infidel, the first to violate women's rights. They banned women from going out. They were the first to impose the imposition of wearing the veil, the burka. We cannot forget—maybe the West can, but we cannot. That is the reason the Northern Alliance is for us a bunch of rapists, looters and criminals that only should be brought to justice. And this is the time. This is the time to bring them to justice.

RAWA recently signed a protocol with the government of the Basque region in Spain to prosecute Northern Alliance war criminals, presumably because that government could bring cases before international courts of law. Can you talk about that?

Spain is one of the countries where we have many very great supporters, and they have welcomed RAWA. So when we raised this issue, they were very interested in helping. ... It was the first time in history that we were offered such help and support. From the beginning, one of the things RAWA wanted to emphasize was the trial of these warlords and criminals. Especially the leaders ...

Leaders who are now a part of the interim government?

Some of them, yes. There's Gen. Rashid Dostum [deputy defense minister of the Interim Authority] and Gen. Mohammed Fahim [defense minister] and Ismail Khan [former governor of Herat] and Abdul Karim Khalili [leader of the Hazaras, a primarily Shiite minority] and Abdullah Abdullah [minister of foreign affairs].

For the Taliban there was nothing really left to destroy.

How was it that war criminals were allowed in the government?

We don't think that the governments or the U.N. don't know what they have done in Afghanistan. This is in fact a question for us: Why the U.N. or U.S. or other Western countries, especially those involved in forming this new government, were so blind to the crimes, to the atrocities of the Northern Alliance? Don't Afghan people at least deserve to live in peace, with security and stability? We know that this is not possible with these warlords, who just know the language of guns. And if there is no pressure on them, we will see the same situation will be repeated.

So when we were criticizing this, we were told it was because, you know, the Northern Alliance is active in Afghanistan. It is there, so we don't have any option. I think this is just an excuse. The Northern Alliance wants to deceive people. Maybe in the West, but in Afghanistan they cannot do that. Of course, we had many other options. Even if we didn't have any other alternative, this was not the solution—to replace one group or regime, a handful of criminals, with others. ...

When the Taliban were in power, and they were ruling more than 95 percent of Afghanistan, we remember that in Washington they were inviting the Taliban to the negotiating table. We asked: How can you invite the Taliban, the most misogynistic regime? They said: Because the Taliban are there, they are ruling 95 percent in Afghanistan, and we cannot exclude them. That's what happened to the Taliban. Where are they now?

It is the same thing with the Northern Alliance. The Northern Alliance is just another form of Taliban. They're just the same. Someone said that the only difference may be in the size of their beards. But the mentality is the same. The power they have is just with the guns they have. And the guns are coming from where? Everyone knows. They are the guns of the United States, Iran, Russia, France and many other countries.

RAWA supported the former king, Zahir Shah?

Yes, we did support him, and we are still supporting him. But that doesn't mean RAWA is supporting monarchy. It is just because of a lack of strong democratic alternatives. ... It is so unfortunate, because we wish that there was a strong movement, a strong alternative for both women and men in Afghanistan. But it's not there.

RAWA strongly favors democracy and a secular government in Afghanistan.

Right now we are probably the only organization of women in Afghanistan that strongly supports democracy and secularism. Democracy because we believe that it's the only cure. It's the opposite of fundamentalism. And if democracy is established in Afghanistan, then there will be no place for fundamentalism in any form. Many think that democracy in Afghanistan is a big question. But for us, it's not. We believe if organizations like RAWA are there, it's possible. It's just a basic thing we need—like food, like air. ...

As for secularism, RAWA has been condemned as being anti-Islam, anti-religion, supporting the West, being Westernized and all that. But it's really not surprising for us because we know our society, we know the enemies that we face and how they misuse religion. ... We have seen in the last 23 years how important it is—in order to bring democracy, peace, security in Afghanistan—to have a government based on secular values. If we don't have a secular government in Afghanistan, then religion will always be a tool to use against people. Especially against women.

But I must say, of course, it's not just talking about bringing democracy or a secular government or women's rights or freedom—we know, because we are there, how difficult a task it is. We have to make sacrifices. We even have to give our lives for this cause, in order to make it possible for the next generation. This is the responsibility that we feel.

Many other Afghan women, even living here or in other European countries, simply choose not to share that responsibility. They just want to refrain from these important issues, and sometimes give the examples of culture, of traditions, of religion,


saying that we must see that there's cultural sensitivity. But we cannot respect a culture that is so backward, in so many ways against women and their rights. In Afghanistan, this is a tradition, this is the culture, to buy or sell a girl—should we respect this only because it is our culture? Or wear the burka because it is our tradition? But it's not a good tradition. Women must have the right to choose whether they want to wear it or not.

It must take an incredible amount of courage to do what members of RAWA do. How do your members stay strong?

There are many reasons to be strong. When people are looking to you as a hope, and women are looking to you as a hope—if you lose hope, then what will they do? Many times people say that, you know, we are brave and we have done a lot. But I believe that living in that country, in that society, we have to be brave, and this is what all RAWA members think. The bravery comes from the conditions, the circumstances that we are living in, the challenges that we are facing.

Many times, perhaps, if you look at the problems, at all the challenges, at all the destruction and the crimes and the atrocities, sometimes it leads you to lose hope. ... For RAWA members, the most important thing that keeps them so strong is the responsibility they feel toward their country and people and themselves, their families. ...

We wish there were hundreds of organizations like RAWA so we could share this responsibility. But right now unfortunately, as a group, we are alone. Many feel that people in Afghanistan don't like RAWA, but it's mainly those who cannot tolerate RAWA because they know that RAWA is, in fact, a light, a hope for Afghan people. ■



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Thousands of U.S. troops are headed for Central Asia. And they're not leaving anytime soon.



Permanent Installation

By J. Eric Duskin

BISHKEK, KYRGYZSTAN

A giant statue of Lenin still towers over the central square in Bishkek, capital of the former Soviet Kyrgyz Republic. Where once the statue's raised right arm pointed to a glorious socialist future, today Lenin seems to be directing attention to the American soldiers on the city's outskirts. But everyone in this quiet little city of tree-lined streets and Staliner-era apartment buildings is already talking about the Americans. No one here can quite believe that thousands of U.S. troops and hundreds of NATO planes will soon be based nearby.

At Bishkek's Manas Airport, Marat could only shake his head as he watched an Air Force C-130 cargo plane thunder down the runway. A university student and Bishkek resident with Russian and Ukrainian parents, Marat was shocked to see American soldiers occupying the main terminal's top floor and neighboring buildings. Across the street from the terminal, hundreds of GIs were diligently constructing a vast new complex of buildings and sheds. As he peered through a fence, Marat said that until now he had considered talk of American imperialism just to be Communist propaganda. Yet the next day, Marat and his friends went to U.S. military headquarters at the Hyatt Regency and applied for jobs.

Before the war in Afghanistan, few Americans had ever heard of Kyrgyzstan—or the other new Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, which all now figure prominently in America's foreign policy plans. The State Department and Pentagon have quietly cobbled together a bold strategy for American military expansion into this region, building military facilities in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and staking claim to a land of deserts, vast steppe and towering mountain ranges along the ancient Silk Road, where no Western country has ever stationed troops before.

The five Central Asian countries, which comprise an area about half the size of the continental United States, have been part of a Russian sphere of influence since the 19th century. Most Russians still consider these countries on Russia's southern border, and the millions of ethnic Russians who live there, as essential to Russian interests. China also views the prospect of permanent American air bases with alarm. What's more, not only is the region rife with religious and ethnic tensions, but all five countries have authoritarian governments responsible for well-documented human rights abuses. Yet neither the billions of dollars that may be spent here nor the risks of antagonizing the neighboring nuclear powers have attracted much critical attention from the U.S. media.

American military forces first increased their presence in the region to prepare for the bombing of Afghanistan. In September, the Bush administration asked Uzbek President Islam Karimov for permission to operate out of the old Soviet Khanabad air base near the Afghan border. By October, the United States and Uzbekistan had announced an accord granting American use of multiple Uzbek air fields in return for promises to protect Uzbek security. Two months later, the Tajik government officially announced that it would provide air bases for U.S. forces. And in mid-December, the United States and Kyrgyzstan signed the agreement to build a 37-acre base in Bishkek that will eventually house 3,000 troops and an unspecified number of NATO aircraft.

A parade of U.S. officials—including Secretary of State Colin Powell, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Senate Majority Leader Tom Dáschle and Gen. Tommy Franks—has visited the Central Asian countries in recent months to confer with the local leaders. Although Franks stated in a recent visit to Bishkek that “we have no plans to build a permanent military base” in

Central Asia, other evidence indicates that the U.S. plans to remain in the region long after the end of the current fighting in Afghanistan.

While the lease for the air base in Kyrgyzstan is valid for only a year, the extensive construction program at the site indicates that the Americans do not plan to leave anytime soon. Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev has already announced his willingness to renew the lease for as long as necessary. Russian journalists have reported that the United States and Uzbekistan signed an agreement leasing the Khanabad base for 25 years. The Pentagon has denied this report but refused to specify the nature of its agreement with Uzbekistan.

Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz has said that building air bases and conducting joint training exercises with local troops will "send a message to everybody, including important countries like Uzbekistan that ... we're not just going to forget about them." This sentiment has been echoed by Colin Powell, who told the House International Relations Committee in early February that "America will have a continuing interest and presence in Central Asia of a kind that we could not have dreamed of before."

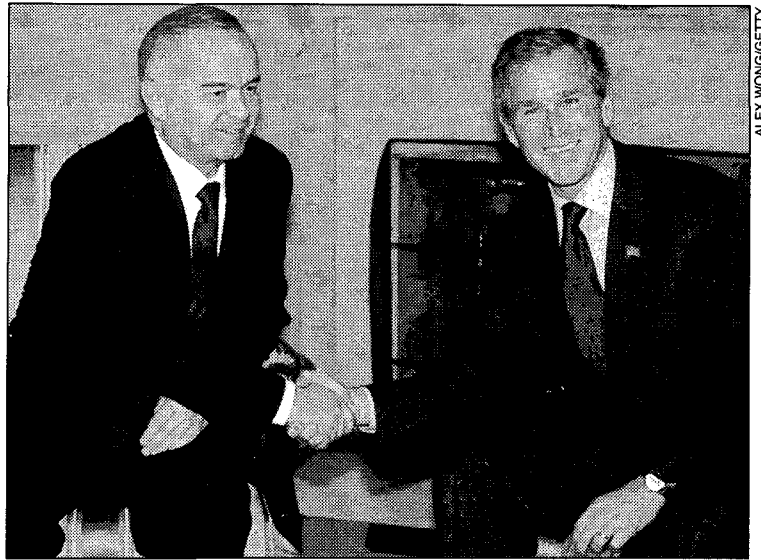
Central Asia's strategic importance seems obvious when looking at a map—but a closer analysis raises a number of troubling issues. The new bases would place American forces on China's western frontier where, in combination with bases to China's east and south, they allow the U.S. military to surround the country. These same bases also place American forces on Russia's southern border for the first time. But presumably missiles already target all important sites in Russia and China, so encirclement of these two nuclear powers does nothing to enhance global security.

Bases in the region also would appear to be useful for continuing American operations in Afghanistan—or even in neighboring Iran, which Bush recently singled out as part of the "axis of evil." Yet with aircraft carriers, long-range bombers, and in-flight refueling, these new bases would actually do little to extend the reach of American air power. None of the bombers in the recent Afghan campaign came from Central Asian bases.

Neither can the bases be justified by a need for large numbers of ground forces, since no one in Washington is seriously contemplating such a deployment. Nor would these bases do much to help get humanitarian aid to those in need: That task falls mainly to the United Nations and non-governmental organizations such as the Red Cross, which are not normally granted use of American bases.

Furthermore, most experts agree that the possibility of radical Muslims seizing power in the region is remote at best. All five countries have governments with secular orientations, and the vast majority of the Muslims in the region are also largely secular. Most men and women wear Western-style clothing, and alcohol and pork, forbidden under Islamic law, are popular here. Only Tajikistan has a substantial number of fundamentalist Muslims, but Russian troops have been keeping order in that country since a civil war in the early '90s.

If these new U.S. bases aren't necessary for American military requirements, why is the Bush Administration pressing so hard to build them? One high-ranking U.S. diplomat in the region, who spoke off the record, told *In These Times* that "we now have an opportunity to move these countries away from Russia."



Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov meets with President Bush in March.

Many observers also suspect that an important motivation for U.S. expansion into the region is oil. Both Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan have substantial energy reserves. Kazakhstan has led the way in development of its energy sector by encouraging foreign investment; already, several Western oil companies are pumping oil from Kazakh fields in and around the Caspian Sea. Last October, Kazakhstan opened a pipeline that takes Kazakh oil through Russia to Western markets.

Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev is already exploring options for a second pipeline. Kazakh officials are most seriously considering two possible routes: one that would go through Iran to the Persian Gulf, and another that would go through Azerbaijan and Georgia into Turkey. The United States is trying to influence Nazarbayev's decision and has publicly stated its preference for the pipeline that would send oil to world markets via Turkey, its NATO ally. But Moscow isn't pleased by American prodding for a second Kazakh pipeline. Industry experts predict that Kazakhstan will not have enough oil to justify use of two pipelines for almost a decade, so prompt development of a second pipeline would only reduce the amount of oil piped through Russia, thereby limiting Russian tax income from the oil crossing its border.

So far, Nazarbayev has maintained good relations with both Russia and the United States. He has met frequently in recent months with Russian officials, including President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Ivan Ivanov, and he has been an active participant in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a loose coalition of Russia, China, and four of the Central Asian states (excluding Turkmenistan).

Nazarbayev also has met with visiting American officials, and in December he traveled to the United States to meet with President Bush. While in Washington, the Kazakh foreign minister signed an "Energy Partnership Declaration" with Colin Powell that calls on the United States and Kazakhstan to cooperate in the development of Kazakhstan's energy sector and reaffirms U.S. support for the pipeline to Turkey. The Kazakh media claim that the United States also pledged to support Kazakhstan's bid for membership in the World Trade Organization.

The ring of new American military bases around Kazakhstan in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan would help send a message to Kazakh officials that they should consider American preferences when making decisions regarding their oil and gas. But any move away from Russia may anger Kazakhstan's large ethnic Russian minority, which makes up 35 to 40 percent of the population. Moreover, American officials would be wise to recall that Russia's oil and gas reserves are far larger than Kazakhstan's and Turkmenistan's combined. America's desire to develop new oil sources outside the Middle East will require Russian cooperation.

Thus far, the most surprising aspect of America's newfound commitment to Central Asia has been Russia's lack of objections. Publicly, Putin has said that the countries of Central Asia are independent and must make their own decisions. Putin has not, however, surrendered Central

Asia to the Americans. The Russians have maintained their own strong military presence, with about 20,000 troops in Tajikistan along the Afghan border as well as both troops and military research facilities in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Some analysts speculate that Putin has kept official silence in the hope that the Bush administration might turn a blind eye to Russian operations in Chechnya.

Yet some Russian generals are already blaming Putin for "losing" Central Asia. Members of the Duma have spoken out against the American military bases, and Moscow newspapers routinely decry American advances into the region. Putin cannot ignore the growing outrage forever. When he does decide to raise the issue, he will likely have the backing of China, which has stated that it does not expect the Americans to remain in the region after hostilities in Afghanistan end.

American officials are quick to point out that their plans for the region include aid for political and economic reform as well as military cooperation. The need for reform is clear. All five countries have authoritarian regimes, and only Kyrgyzstan has a leader who was not a Communist Party boss in Soviet times. Opposition parties are allowed to exist in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, but even in these countries, elections are neither free nor fair. In Kyrgyzstan, President Akayev had his most popular rivals kept off the ballot in recent elections. The government of Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev has also routinely harassed the leaders and supporters of rival parties.

Meanwhile, the leaders of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the worst of the bunch, have created Stalinist personality cults and ruthlessly suppress all dissent. In Uzbekistan's most recent election, President Karimov ran against an unknown, hand-picked opponent who boasted on Election Day that

he too had voted for Karimov. Just days before a visit by Powell this past December, the Uzbek Parliament announced its intention to name Karimov President-for-Life.

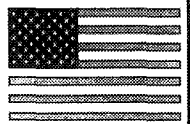
Thousands have been arrested in Uzbekistan by the National Security Service (successor to the Uzbek KGB) simply because they questioned government policies or were thought to practice Islam too devoutly. Human Rights Watch claims that police torture has resulted in the deaths of at least 15 Uzbek prisoners in the past two years. Observers say that Uzbekistan's combination of poverty, unemployment and brutal repression is pushing small but increasing numbers of Uzbeks into radical Islamic groups that operate covertly and stand opposed to Karimov's regime.

Bush officials say they are working to promote democracy in the region, and they have spoken out against some human rights violations and various perversions of the democratic process. Yet on January 30, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher confirmed that Uzbekistan could expect a three-fold increase in foreign aid for the coming year. The Uzbek aid request is not tied to any improvement in the country's human rights record. Although Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minnesota) added language to the Foreign Operations Bill requiring the State Department to report on Uzbek human rights, few expect much Senate opposition to the administration's request for increased aid. There's certainly no discussion in Congress of the larger question of whether anyone besides local dictators and oil company executives stand to benefit from America's presence in Central Asia.

Back in Bishkek, Marat and his friends have waited several weeks but still haven't received any job offers from U.S. officials. The payoff for most other people in Central Asia and the United States may prove equally illusory. ■

J. Eric Duskin is an assistant professor of history at Christopher Newport University and the author of Stalinist Reconstruction and the Confirmation of a New Elite. He is currently living in Central Asia as a Fulbright Scholar.

"America will have a continuing interest and presence in Central Asia of a kind we could not have dreamed of before."

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Cuba Confidential

By Carl Bromley

Our condition as ghosts is perfect and permanent," a mournful Reinaldo Arenas said two years before his death in 1990. "An enormous circus tent has fallen over our ideas."

It was an admission of defeat. Exiled Cuban writers like Arenas and Guillermo Cabrera Infante, who in the '60s—as Arenas noted—"made the whole world

Cabrera Infante's wild masterpiece *Three Trapped Tigers*.

Cabrera Infante, exiled in London since the late '60s, attempts to exhume this lost period with his recent, very short novel, *Guilty of Dancing the Cha Cha Cha*—three stories "trying to become one" set in a Cuban restaurant, sometime in the late '50s. Beginning with the same scene—a rainy late afternoon, a guy and a gal chowing in Central Havana—the three love stories become analogous to three visions of Cuba: Afro-Cuban religious rituals and ecstasies; fancy hotels and Yankee tourists; and finally, in a dazzlingly claustrophobic episode, a Stalinist dystopia where "everything and everybody is guilty."

Though it's a tasty morsel, *Guilty* is still only a glimpse of the author's powers, his latest lament for his lost city. He is unable

to escape old haunts. Perhaps, like Arenas before him, he is locked in an existential rut. Arenas, unsure of what would become of Cuban writing, bleakly hoped that maybe "someone might be able to create good literature in the United States, in Spanish." Perhaps blinded by his own pessimism, he couldn't imagine new literary blood emerging in Cuba or among Cuba's "low-intensity" exiles in Mexico and Europe. Yet after decades of stupor, Cuban writing, garlanded by international prizes, is back.

Blame the law of unintended consequences. Because of Castro's "special period," declared after the severe economic shock following the abrupt end of Soviet aid, an entire generation has grown up without paper. As crime novelist Leonardo Padura Fuentes puts it, this cloud has a profound silver lining: "For the first time since the revolution, there is now a distance between writers and the state apparatus."

Young Cuban writers have seized the opportunity. "I belong to a generation born after the revolution and which approaches the writing of literature by stripping away the marked ideological influences that have damaged Cuban literature," the young author Angel Santiesteban declares. "We are trying to rescue the necessary, vital autonomy of literature."

Sultry Zoé Valdés once wrote that the Soviets' greatest contribution to Cuba was "an odor like no other in the world." Two beautiful recent books, Antonio José Ponte's short collection *In the Cold of the Malecón* and José Manuel Prieto's *Nocturnal Butterflies of the Russian Empire*, have cold northern winds of the former Soviet Union blasting through them. Rather like clinging to one's Betamax tapes while everyone else went VHS (or have even moved on to DVD), the characters in both of these books confront their obsolescence.

The jewel in Ponte's collection concerns an historian and a can-

All photographs accompanying this essay are by Matthew P. Nicolau. THIS PAGE: *Untitled* (mother and daughter on the bus to the beach near Nueva Gerona).

Books discussed in this essay:

Guilty of Dancing the Cha Cha Cha

By Guillermo Cabrera Infante
Welcome Rain Publishers
120 pages, \$22.95

In the Cold of the Malecón

By Antonio José Ponte
City Lights Books
127 pages, \$10.95

Nocturnal Butterflies of the Russian Empire

By José Manuel Prieto
Grove Press
336 pages, \$13

Adios Muchachos

By Daniel Chavarría
Akashic Books
245 pages, \$13.95

Outcast

By José Latour
William Morrow
217 pages, \$24

Spy's Fate

By Arnaldo Correa
Akashic Books
340 pages, \$24.95

Dirty Havana Trilogy

By Pedro Juan Gutiérrez
Ecco Press
416 pages, \$13.95

into their homeland, and creativity into their only faith," were now motivated only by fury, rage and alienation. State-imposed socialist realism had expelled the jazzy libertine passions of Cuba's avant-garde found in such works as Arenas' *Singing from the Well* and



THIS PAGE: *The Slow Boat to Isla de la Juventud*.
OPPOSITE PAGE: *Bus Stop, Nueva Gerona*.

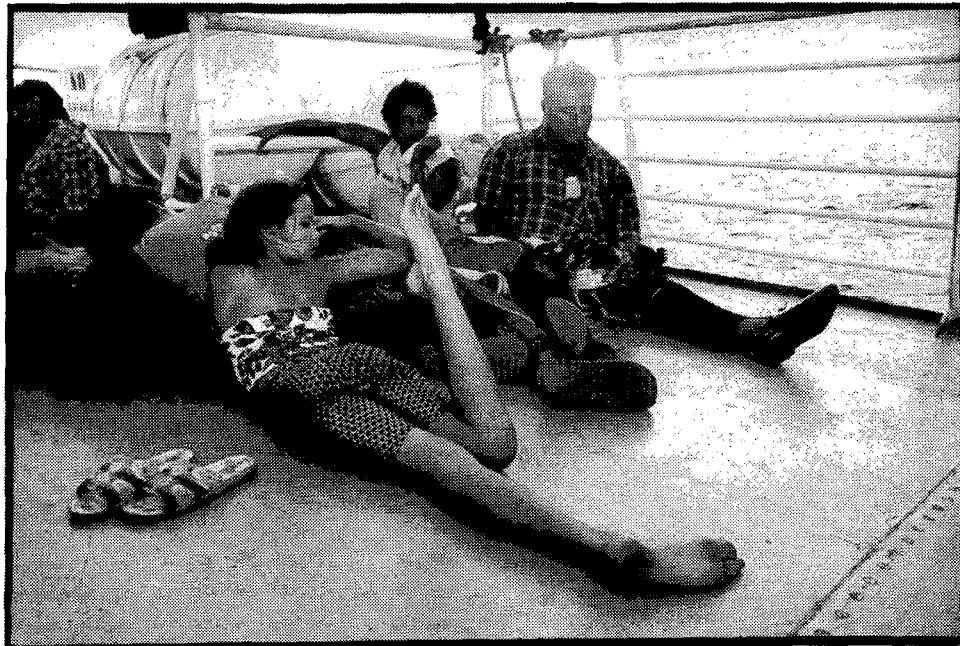
cer-riven astrologer who fall in love, leave their jobs and homes and roam Havana, arousing the suspicions of authorities who cannot entertain the notion of voluntary homelessness. "You cannot stop being a number," a social worker lectures them. Fate hangs heavily in this bittersweet and existentialist take on late (or is it post?) socialist Cuba.

Nocturnal Butterflies' narrator, known simply as J, describes his predicament: "I went to Russia to study optics, but I didn't graduate." He's a smuggler who "floats through the membranes" of the states of the former Soviet empire, selling the surpluses of the shrinking Red Army, "propelled, sent into outer space, by the explosion of 1991, the enormous collision of East and West that produced stars, planets, asteroids."

The novel is cleverly structured around the seven letters J receives from the mysterious V, an exotic dancer he meets (and falls in love with) while in Istanbul on business for a mysterious Swede who wants him to catch a rare butterfly. J tries to smuggle V out of Istanbul—she is indentured to a ruthless Armenian gangster—but she gives him the slip at the ferry terminal. As her letters arrive in Yalta, he postpones his reply—this is a novel about procrastination—and immerses himself in reconstructing her memory and piecing together the strange events that have bedeviled him. V is largely created through her absence, but J is just as enigmatic and elusive.

J always remains just an initial; his past is sketchy, traces of his Cuban identity are intimated through his ability to recognize certain forms of music, but he's more like a lost European intellectual possessed by questions on letter writing, identity and desire. Though the illusions to Nabokov are obvious, *Nocturnal Butterflies* is reminiscent of Walter Benjamin's writings about his Latvian muse Asja Lacis, and his wanderings through the phantasmagoria of desolate Europe wracked by inflation.

Like Benjamin, J is obsessed by optics, vision and the artificial forms of magnification. He sells Army-surplus binoculars with night vision, and he notes how easy and safe it is to talk in sunglasses. He relies



on ocular metaphor. His attention to detail is microscopic, but in so doing he loses a sense of larger context. His vision becomes another form of blindness. Only in retrospect can he see that his parallel pursuit of V and the butterfly is linked not just metaphorically, but "part of a larger plan."

The unraveling social fabric in Eastern Europe finds a parallel in the Cuba of the special period, which provides a potent social background for some of most interesting fiction coming from the island, the Cuban noirs currently published by the excellent small press Akashic Books. José Latour, Daniel Chavarría and Arnaldo Correa are not angry young men, but veterans of the Cuban system. Chavarría, a former Uruguayan revolutionary based in Cuba, says, "The collapse of the East Bloc has left me emotionally ravaged. I am still a Communist at heart, but I write novels in my head."

Chavarría is a very saucy writer, as evinced by his frothy and lugubrious novel, *Adios Muchachos*, about Alicia, a hooker who nabs clients with her suggestive cycling style through fancier parts of Havana. She has perfected this to a fine art: Clients, through her feigned injury, are lured back to her mother's apartment, where they soon get the idea that Alicia isn't interested in their first-aid skills. She's looking for her "Prometheus, the one who was going to

free her from the blackouts and scarcities of the special period."

Latour's *Outcast* takes place from 1994 to 1995, during the special period's most austere and excruciating moments, when rationing has trimmed Elliot Steil, the hero, of 40 pounds. A schoolteacher passed over for promotion, he leads a sedentary life watching—blackouts permitting—TV images beamed over from Florida with his girlfriend Natasha, a former economist now working as a checkout girl.

Steil is offered the chance to escape to the States when an American appears and claims to be an old pal of his recently deceased American father. But halfway across the straits, the man leaves Steil for dead, dumping him into the shark-infested sea. He survives, and makes it to Miami thirsting for revenge and looking for answers. Latour is based in Havana and has admitted that a novel like this—it doesn't blanch from looking Cuba straight in the eye—would have got him locked up in the '70s.

Correa's *Spy's Fate* is a similar revelation, a detailed excursion into the Byzantine world of the Cuban secret service and rivalries among the island's ruling elite. This is a layered, complex and engaging novel that warrants comparison with Graham Greene's "entertainments" and John Le Carré's recent fiction. Carlos Manuel, a spy of some distinction, returns to Cuba after many years abroad, haunted by the suicide of his wife. He finds the

new Cuba alienating. "Dollars, dollars, that's all that counts these days," a friend tells him. His angry kids barely know him. There's a terrifically poignant moment when he watches them prepare to disembark to Florida on a small boat: "He stood there watching them, not knowing what to do."

Though jobless and homeless, Carlos' Soviet training comes in very useful, as he attempts to bring his children back. He rescues his kids from pirates and ends up in Florida—but his appearance there triggers reactions from both the American and Cuban intelligence services. Has he defected? Is he a traitor? Is he on a secret mission? The old battles of Central America in the '80s are replayed; Carlos has to fight an old CIA nemesis, paranoid factions within his own service and, of course, win the affection of his children.

World literature, that term we give to writing that takes place beyond the confines of Manhattan, is dominated by the faddish habits and tastes of a small corporate and editorial elite based in less than a dozen multinational media companies. That each "national" literature destined for English-language consumption has to show off a native exoticism predates our age of conglomeration, but nowadays a certain sensual exoticism is *de rigueur* for foreign writers hoping to break a very tough English-language market.

It is the virtue of many of the Cuban writers under review that they avoid such branding, and have small and medium-sized publishing houses as their hosts over here. Yet Cuban writing, like Cuba, is judged to have its own "comparative advantage." Zoé Valdés gestures to this in *Yocandra in the Paradise of Nada*, her bitter, witty tour of "the high society of tropical socialism." Her narrator writes, "It would appear that all Chapter Eights of Cuban literature are condemned to being pornographic."

Well, every chapter of Pedro Juan Gutiérrez's squalid and compelling *Dirty Havana Trilogy* is Chapter Eight. Reminiscent of Daniel Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*, it's an extraordinarily bleak, grueling and savage account of the special period, where lives are reduced to their crude essence. The characters of this novel—for want of anything else to do—indulge in group sex, orgies and partner swaps. It's a relentless tale of downward mobility and extreme sex.

Pedro Juan, our guide, is a former journalist who now ekes out a living buying and selling on the black market, spending time in prison or in dead-end jobs, while going on a sex safari through the ramshackle rooms and roofs of Central Havana. Chapter headings have a punkish, three-chord quality—"Nothing To Do," "Down, But Not Out"—as does his life. Despite the many carnal consolations available to him, there are down-

sides: "My life is always being wrecked by the cursed trio: love, health, money. Love is a lie, money slips through the fingers, health is ruined in a second."

Pedro Juan's life oscillates between sordid triumph ("The truth is, I like my own prick") and paranoid racism ("These black women are dangerous, always ready to explode"). In fact, the racist stereotypes Pedro Juan indulges—there's not a black man who isn't well endowed or a mulatta who isn't multiply orgasmic—bruise both the novel and its author; Gutiérrez has admitted that 90 percent of the novel is autobiographical, written during a period of complete personal collapse. But these are notes from an undeniably damaged life: "There's no heroism in me, or in anybody anymore."

A new generation of foreigners is flocking to Cuba for, in the words of one English critic, its "vibrant soul and effortless sensuality," for its sun, sea and (diminishing) socialism. There's not much left of rebel Cuba, or its remarkable achievements in health, education and sport. Conducted by Fidel's aging rebel yell but fortified by 40 years of resistance to Washington's ridiculous blockade, the revolution is overshadowed by the new sex tourists drawn by the glossy version of Cuba Linda, thirsting after mulatta women, sanitized Santería, Afro-Cuban chic, lush dollar-hotels, tourist-only beach resorts, cigars and old-school tunes played incessantly by ubiquitous clones of the Buena Vista Social Club.

I can't help but think of the pathetic figure of Diego Maradona, the fallen coke-addled maestro of Argentinean soccer, Che's image tattooed to his arm, slouching into Havana for treatment in one of the new, elite health-tourism clinics. Asked why he was in Cuba, El Diego declared Fidel the last world leader with "cojones."

But while Fidel plays greater lip service to the rebel Cuba with grand *patria o muerte* speeches, you get the impression from this new body of literature that the old man is assiduously, determinedly cultivating the Cigar Aficionado Cuba. ■

Carl Bromley is an editor at *Nation Books*. He is at work on his first novel.



The Grace Card

By Margaret Wappler

Race, sex, college and booze. These are the four thematic kingpins that muscle their way through Marc Nesbitt's *Gigantic*. Breaking noses and bruising hearts, this debut short-story collection

Gigantic

By Marc Nesbitt

Grove

192 pages, \$25

is as heady as a Charles Bukowski poem and as rowdy as that poet's many barroom brawls, but the stories are never clumsy or banal—just clamorous and passionate. Like the best of jazz improvisers, Nesbitt is almost spazzy in his enthusiasm for the potential of language. *Gigantic* so noisily dines on words, sipping and slurping and smacking until there's just a carcass left, that language gets a new lease on life.

In "Quality Fuel for Electric Living," Nesbitt's sentences shiver with kinetic force: "The dash says 8:13 in the A.M. and I'm already sweating; last night's whiskey still twitches in my stomach, biting at the lining. So dehydrated my blood feels like electric tinsel." Zeroing in on the precise way we communicate with ourselves and others, *Gigantic* is loaded with junkyard-dog syntax, loopy turns of logic and an in-joke sense of description. But for all the individuality, it's never cryptic. Instead, it's intuitive and playful.

The first day of his job with the State Highway, Nimrod, the character reeling from a painful hangover in "Quality Fuel," is assigned to remove some fresh kill off the road by his boss, Pucker. A "half-Canadian-take on a redneck," with "neck veins screw-

ing spiral, alive" and a "State Highway T shirt tight as a rash and sun faded green," Pucker's forceful yammering is like "shrapnel," so piercing Nesbitt worries it could "halve a skull."

Those descriptions seem enough to convey the point, but Nesbitt takes it one step further—nearly all of Pucker's dialogue is in capital letters: "HERE'S A TELLING STAT ABOUT MY LOVE LIFE, LET'S GET THIS ONE ON SPORTSCENTER! PAST SIX MONTHS, ONLY NIGHT I GOT LAID AND THE ONLY NIGHT I PUKED BOTH FELL ON THE SAME DATE!"

Visually, this may seem like nothing more than a gimmick, but the dialogue is so blaring, especially in Nimrod's mind, that the trick seems not only justified, but completely necessary. It also shows that Nesbitt, who was selected by *The New Yorker* as a 2001 Debut Fiction Writer, isn't afraid to bang on the bars of literary fiction, a genre that is sometimes too mousy for its own good.

For all of Nesbitt's fireworks and playfulness, he knows how to be subtle and serious with a theme. Sex, college and booze give *Gigantic* its color, but the race card, so to speak, is what gives this book its muscle, its fine-tuned sensitivity to being the odd one out.

The characters in *Gigantic* are acutely aware of riding the chasm between white and black, never fully inhabiting either, encompassing both. Like the author, most of the central characters are of mixed heritage, but Nesbitt's too smart to attack this bull straight on. Instead, the details stain the background, and the book is all the more powerful for it.

In "Polly Here Somewhere," Nesbitt writes, "My white mom and black dad hunch in gray slumps at opposite sides of the house, watching snow fall in fistfuls." Later, when the unnamed son won't mingle at the junior high dance, we learn he hangs out "away from the crowd, for reasons like I got Hendrix hair but can't play guitar. Or breakdance." It's a perfectly modest detail, but it says everything.

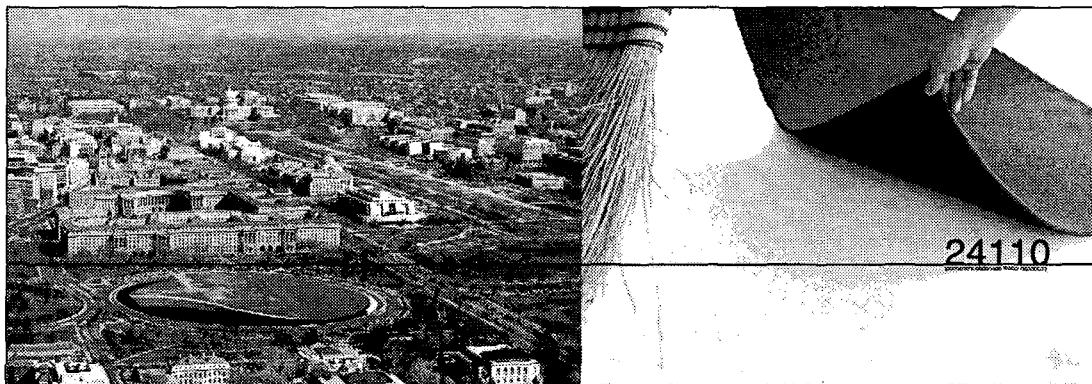
In "The Ones Who May Kill You in the Morning," Cole, already humiliatingly employed as a lawn jockey, is asked to wear a ski mask while he greets guests. The boss spells out the reasons in, well, black and white: "Well, no offense, but you're yella as a sick Chink. ... And I'll be honest, people don't need reminders of someplace they didn't want to be. Or worse than that, some mistake from a long time ago."

Cole wears the mask—he's an agreeable type and he needs the job. And though he gets a little revenge on "Fatsby" by sleeping with his flirty, hypocritical daughter, the real revenge, the one that grabs the reader by the collar, doesn't hit until the very last moment. Cole's co-worker, Vince, drunk and incensed, commits one brief act on Cole's behalf that makes a statement louder than bombs. It's the kind of moment so loaded with violent feeling we're left wasted in its aftermath, exhilarated and spent.

But however much we want to cheer on Cole and Vince's victories, piddling or dramatic, the effect is unsettling. What fate might Cole meet when the adrenaline wears off? What will happen to Vince? More hauntingly, think of fates met by so many before them. Moments like these make *Gigantic* not just a stylish feast but a book with lasting impact, one that whispers in your mind long after the last shout is over. ■

Margaret Wappler is a freelance writer based in Chicago.

Where will it go? So asked the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, which held a competition to design a public monument that would also serve as a secure repository for the world's "excess" plutonium. Shown at right are two examples of the winning entry by Michael Simonian, who proposed sweeping the plutonium—which will remain radioactive for the next 240,000 years—under the Ellipse in Washington.



Busy Doing Nothing

By Carl Bromley

Laurent Cantet's *Time Out* confirms everything we expected and were promised from the director's excellent *Human Resources*, his 1999

Time Out

Directed by Laurent Cantet

debut film of corporate malfeasance, class struggle and family strife. But this time Cantet deals with a different kind of corporate discontent.

Vincent (Aurélian Recoing) has been dulled by 20 years of corporate conformity. We meet him on the road, catching some shut-eye at a highway rest stop, but later recounting his exploits as a corporate dynamo on his cell phone to his admiring wife. He's living a lie: Vincent was fired from his job several weeks earlier.

The life that he recounts in such breathless and marvelous detail to his family and friends is the result of his remarkable powers of confabulation. In a masterly act of improvisation, he pretends to have landed a prestigious position as a consultant to a U.N. devel-

The more complex his story becomes, the more prone he is to exposure. Inevitably, leaks begin to spring. As elaborate as his new reality is, it doesn't pay the bills. To do that, he develops a con using his new "diplomatic" status to seduce old schoolmates and former business colleagues into putting money in a fictitious cross-border, get-rich-quick investment scheme. How will he pay the dividends he has promised once the



Karin Viard and Aurélian Recoing take a little *Time Out*.

money runs out? How long can he compartmentalize his double life? Borrowed money soon becomes borrowed time.

Cantet has been described rightly as "France's foremost cinematic poet of the workplace," but his hand is just as skilled at divining questions of dual and multiple identity, and probing the patrilineal tensions of modern family life. Is Vincent a crushed and humiliated executive—a company man without a company—whose shame at being unemployed explains his elaborate deceit? You certainly feel so at the outset. But as the film continues, we get a strong sense of Vincent as a subversive and affirmative presence—his improvisations are a means to freedom and reinvention. The film's tragic register comes when his new world collides with the old: a loving wife and family, an overbearing father.

The scenes with Vincent's wife, Muriel (Karin Viard), particularly on her visit to Switzerland, have a tender, tragic irony. Will she discover his ruse, or has she known all along and is indulging him? There's moment of pristine cinematic beauty, when she seems to disappear into thin air as she and Vincent get lost in the snow. It signifies the shadow world that Vincent has entered, how his grip on reality has become tenuous, even spectral.

Vincent might be able to pull one over on his family and friends, but the more roguish and down-at-heel elements in the film figure him out quickly.

Jean-Michel (Serge Livrozet) is a smooth career con artist, and the film's great revelation, the sort of charming bastard you'd find in Jean-Pierre Melville's films. Livrozet injects paradoxical integrity into the role, something you would expect from the former gangster, prisoner, author, anarchist and protégé of Michel Foucault. Sniffing out Vincent's game instantly, he's in a position to turn the tables and make Vincent his mark. But Jean Michel, a former PR man, political fixer and jailbird, has a noble strain in him: He admires the outlaw in Vincent, and invites him to join his cross-border counterfeit

goods scheme. In a world of corporate and personal confabulation, fiction and deceit, this old fraudster is the film's moral center, a beacon of uncomfortable truths.

Time Out—part social document, part noir, part road movie, part tragedy, part meditation on the nature of fiction and reality—has the tension and bearing of one of Claude Chabrol's rustic and creepy psychological thrillers, as Vincent creates more and more traps for himself. But *Time Out* doesn't have a body count: The blows are ultimately directed at the soul. The wounds Cantet's characters bear, especially Vincent's, come from the almost irreconcilable tensions of modern corporate life. Is there a way to escape?

In a short and very poignant scene at a truck stop, we find Vincent eyeing with envy the nomadic and proletarian life of the truckers. His life will never be theirs. The siren call of bourgeois normality is too powerful. ■

Unemployment leads to elaborate deceit, borrowed money and borrowed time.

opment agency in Geneva. We see Vincent exploring the clean, glassy and anonymous interiors of the U.N. building, eavesdropping on meetings, smiling at secretaries. Vincent becomes so emboldened that he convinces his family that his new status as a development expert, instrumental in elaborating grand plans to rehabilitate sub-Saharan Africa, has made him a mini-master of the universe—no longer an input in a corporate matrix, but a man doing good.

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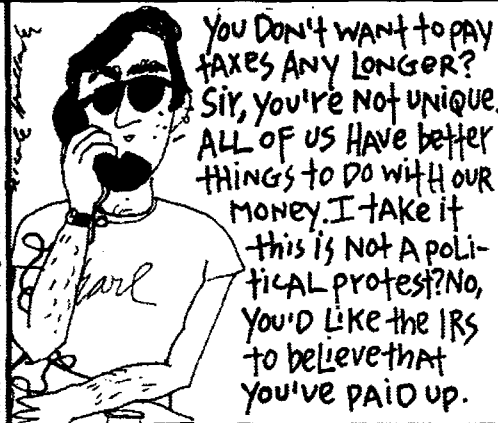
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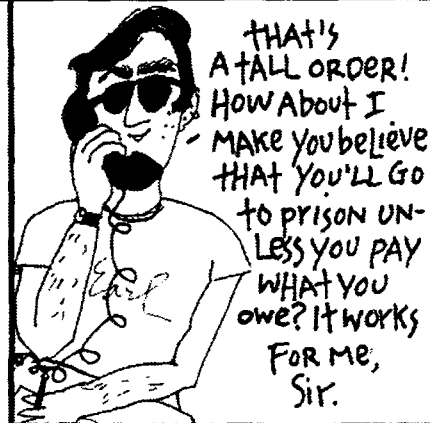


SYLVIA

the RYNO Hot Line: when
you'd like to fool a large
institution.



By Nicole Hollander





PHOTOS, BACK PAGE: Anti-war march on Geary Street, San Francisco, 1971; LEFT: Police in gas masks watch a City of Berkeley car burn during a Peoples Park demonstration, 1969; BELOW: Black Panther Bobby Hutton in front of the Oakland Police Department, 1967. Hutton was later killed in a shootout with Oakland Police.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30 philosophy homework and the correct pronunciation of Japanese vowels. Each small table is occupied by someone bending over a laptop, examining a pile of papers, or whispering into a cell phone. The only note of chaos in the handsomely minimalist décor is a wall filled with a panoramic shot of the thousands who abandoned their studies to gather in Sproul Plaza on that long-ago autumn day.

With it is a quote from de facto leader Mario Savio: "There comes a time when the operation of this machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart that you can't take part ... and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears ... and you've got to make it stop." Today, Sproul Plaza is quiet. A lone table urges U.S. forces out of the Philippines. Most students are aiming, in these insecure days, for a place at the gearshift of the machine.

Down the street, at the corner of Telegraph and Haste, People's Park is another testament to the University's failed intentions. They had planned to build a dorm on the vacant block in 1969. Neighbors turned it into a park. It became a battleground. The dorm never was built; it's a park to this day, albeit a frowsy one where homeless men lay sleeping bags among the saplings. A sand volleyball court, an attempt to reclaim the park for student use, was abandoned when it became a popular target for nighttime pissers.

Across the bay in San Francisco, a similar land battle left nothing but a hole in the ground for 22 years. When elderly Filipinos were evicted from Chinatown's International Hotel, the site became a symbol of the war against gentrification. Photographer Robert Hsiang remembers the night when the neighborhood lost the fight for the "I-Hotel."

"Sheriff Richard Hongisto, the Mandarin chief as it were, brought in mounted police. He arrived with his own sledgehammer to break down the front door of the hotel where the anti-eviction protesters were holed up inside. People were dragged out one by one."

Hsiang's photo captures the wide-eyed expression of a police horse as it charges toward the camera, its helmeted rider gripping a truncheon in a black-gloved hand. "I remember being pretty frightened," he recalls.

The building was demolished, but nothing was built in its place. "People lost their homes, and for so long nothing productive was going on. This was just a dead space mired in

politics," Hsiang says, staring through the Cyclone fence into the pit where the building once stood on the corner of Kearny and Jackson. Right now, the I-Hotel site is simply mire-pools of muddy water, piles of gravel and broken brick presided over by gigantic mechanical shovels. The good news is that the building's history has come full circle: This is the beginning of a \$40 million International Hotel Senior Housing complex with a parochial school, a Chinese language center and a Manilatown Museum and Cultural Center.

"It's the best one could hope for," says Hsiang. "I'd hope that it'll be a reminder to a new generation that problems of displacement and corporate greed are continuous. But the struggle shouldn't only be expressed through rhetoric. I do think artists, photographers, poets, muralists can offer political messages in a ways that are universal and not so didactic."

Out in San Francisco Bay, ferries shuttle tourists to Alcatraz Island for ten bucks a head. In November 1969, a group of 80 Indians made a similar trip without benefit of tickets or tour guides. They stayed at the windy former prison, defying federal orders and welcoming a growing cadre of supporters, for 19 months. Theirs became a worldwide cause célèbre.

"Despite its problems, there is no question that the occupation of Alcatraz Island signaled the beginning of a new era in Indian affairs," writes Edward D. Castillo. "That Native American 'in your face' attitude started here." Most organized tours focus on the island's past as a penitentiary, but it's possible to wander the cold, deserted barracks and kitchen to imagine a few hundred idealists toughing it out in a place that "resembles most Indian reservations," as they said at the time.

The Whole World's Watching is as much guidebook as historical document, a journal of how far America's social conscience has traveled. And how far it has yet to go: "This neighborhood looks almost exactly as it did 30 years ago," Hilliard comments as the bus rolls through West Oakland. Four bullet holes mark the yellow house where police shot the Black Panthers' first martyr, 17-year-old Bobby Hutton. Like Hilliard, the house's owner doesn't want us to forget the lives lost and freedoms gained during the time when the world's attention turned to this small, rebellious region by the bay. ■



RONALD J. RIESTERER

Walking the Talk

The Living Legacy of the Radical

By Chiori Santiago

David Hilliard, former chief of staff of the Black Panther Party, orders the bus driver to halt before a two-story house on 47th Street. We all turn to stare. The house is the color of mint ice cream, with hunter green outlining the windows and a contractor's truck parked in the driveway. It's run-of-the-mill as houses go in this part of West Oakland. Yet for Hilliard it's akin to a shrine. Huey P. Newton, who would grow up to be the Black Panther Party's co-founder and most visible frontman, spent his boyhood here after his family migrated from Monroe, Louisiana in 1945.

"If this was Atlanta, and this was the home of Dr. Martin Luther King, there would be a plaque out front, wouldn't there?" he muses into the public address system. "But this is Oakland, and we're talking about the Black Panthers. We have no monuments."

As he did in the '60s, Hilliard hasn't waited for someone else to solve that problem. On the last Saturday of every month, he hires a bus and takes curious visitors on a Black Panther Legacy Tour, a three-hour journey to places where a small group of activists forever altered politics, education and social reform in the San Francisco Bay Area.

With the recent publication of *The Whole World's Watching: Peace and Social Justice Movements of the 1960s & 1970s* (Berkeley Art Center, \$24.95), Hilliard at last has a plaque, of sorts, commemorating the contributions of his cohorts. The collection of black-and-white photographs and essays by a spectrum of observers, from Judy Grahn to Peter Coyote, is a memoir, ode and inscription to the impact of those roiling decades.

The book began as a catalog to a photojournalism exhibit of the same title organized by the Berkeley Art Center, a tiny, city-operated gallery which itself is an icon of cultural progressiveness. The project grew into an examination of "the nation's history, as it played out in California" through the many movements that marched from here across the globe.

Although the times they are a-changed, many of the physical settings of those protests remain. They loom in the back-



JEFFREY BL

ground of the book's photographs: the impassive face of Alameda County Courthouse, from which Huey Newton rode triumphant upon his release from its jail; the rooftop where James Rector, drawn by the spectacle of People's Park protests, was killed by police gunfire.

Two miles from the Berkeley Art Center are the mighty columns of Sproul Hall, ground zero for "the first great campus rebellion of the sixties," as Charles Wollenberg describes the Free Speech Movement. When, in 1964, the University of California tried to ban the dozens of pamphlet-laden card tables at Sproul Plaza, students responded with a 36-hour sit-in. A couple of years ago, a Free Speech Café opened adjacent to Moffitt Undergraduate Library to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the mother of all student protests.

There's nothing revolutionary about the menu here; status-quo sandwiches, espresso and chai tea are served from behind a counter of laminated blonde wood. Plenty of speechifying is going on at the moment, but mostly by students concerned with

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